

PRIVATE SHEETS OF THE CENTURY

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MEHLIS Shadow of the Leader

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The book is dedicated to the tenacity of one of Stalin's closest and long-term associates, Lev Mskhlis, who was the true a[eg evo] - the second "I" of the leader.

On these pages, the reader will meet with Stalin and Molotov, Voroshilov and Beris, Zhukov and Timoshenko, Gorky and Fadssv, dozens of other famous and ordinary characters of Soviet history of the 20-50s of the twentieth century. The action takes place either in the Kremlin cabinet of the leader, or halfway through the battlefield somewhere near Kerch; the picture of the plsum of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks will be replaced by the scene of the bss-judicial execution of generals in the autumn of 1941; the tragedy of the people, who had enough of the dashing of war and famine, is adjacent to the luxury that the Soviet nobility allowed themselves.

Was Mehlis the embodiment of evil, or simply personified its contradictory time? These questions are answered by the book of Doctor of Historical Sciences Yury Rubtsov, created on the basis of archival documents, which have long been in secret storage.

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INTRODUCTION

WHO IS THE "NEW MAN"?

In the photographs depicting the party and state elite of the USSR in the 30s and 40s of the last century, you can hardly see this person in the foreground. How many party congresses have passed during this time, sessions of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, meetings with Stakhanovites and Papaninites, Spanish volunteers and heroes of long-distance air travel! How many opportunities there were to publicly record one's closeness to the main Bolshevik leaders! An, no. The characteristic profile of Mekhlis, his paramilitary jacket is almost invariably overlapped by other figures.

Lev Zakharovich in such cases really preferred the shade. Especially desirable if it was rejected by Stalin, who once and for all became an idol for him, an inaccessible model. This is how he behaved not only when photographing, but also in life: as if looking over the shoulder of the leader and never clearly demonstrated intentions to move forward to a prominent political role. He chose the fate of his Stalin's ayeg, his second "I". And obviously, because he always kept in mind the wisdom of the ancients about lightning, most often hitting the peaks. And, of course, realizing that

hidden power, because of political backstage, is no less than public power, and sometimes even more sophisticated and sweet.

Truly canine loyalty to the owner, worldly cunning and excellent knowledge of all the springs of the Kremlin mechanism of power gave the desired result: Mekhlis, having experienced moderate ups and downs that were not very painful, managed to hold out in the clip of the leaders of the USSR for a quarter of a century and, unlike many of his colleagues, died. not from the executioner's bullet, not on the camp bunk, but in his bed.

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So who is he - Lev Mekhlis? It is still difficult to get an answer to this question, not only for the average reader. Proclaiming the thesis that history is created by people, specific individuals, domestic historical science, which for many decades was under the special supervision of ideological censors, was forced to give preference to an impersonal display of the role of the masses, an analysis of the manifestations of the laws of social development. During the period of Stalinism, dozens or even hundreds of historical characters were withdrawn from scientific circulation, from people's memory. Later, to them, although partially rehabilitated, but still sanctimoniously hushed up, were added personalities who, for various reasons, were inconvenient for the next political leader. As a result, an obviously abnormal, absurd situation has developed, when, according to a well-known expression, national history began to look deserted, like a midnight street.

The current stage of Russia's development is marked by the unprecedented interest of our compatriots in the country's past, in those who created its history and culture - politicians and generals, scientists and patrons. What has long been noted is confirmed: just when society is at a historical turning point, people experience a special need to turn to the heritage of previous generations. They look for spiritual and moral support in their experience and deeds, they strive to learn lessons from mistakes and blunders.

Interest in the recent history of our country is focused on the period of Stalinism, which is constantly confirmed by the results of opinion polls conducted by the largest centers for the study of public opinion - VTsIOM, Levada Center and others. This does not seem surprising. It is there, in Stalinism, that many, many phenomena observed in today's society are rooted. It was then that the mechanism of power was formed, which was characterized by the almost complete alienation of the people from this power, the dominance of the elite, the "new class" (the term of the Yugoslav scholar and dissident M. Djilas) - a layer of party and state officials who surrounded the leader and thanks to the monopoly on management received special privileges and material advantages. This mechanism took shape and was worked out gradually, on the basis of more and more large-scale repressions. Stalin used the latter, on the one hand, as a means of eliminating any dissent, and on the other, as

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a method of selecting cadres personally devoted to him, brought up in an atmosphere not of revolutionary romance, but of apparatus, "undercover" struggle.

The process, however, was two-way. Not only Stalin formed his "Praetorian Guard". His retinue also played their own king, paving the way for autocracy, the despotism of the leader, which was beneficial to herself. L.Z. Mekhlis played a very prominent role in this process. In the recent history of our country, his name is inseparable from the name of Stalin (although, of course, these figures are not of equal size) and is associated with the process of establishing a totalitarian system of power in the USSR, with propaganda justification and coverage of all kinds of campaigns in the spirit necessary for the Stalinist leadership — from forced industrialization beyond all norms and forced collectivization to shameful trials of the ideological opponents of the leader, with mass repressions of military personnel on the eve and during the Great Patriotic War. Mekhlis remained in the memory of people as a faithful Stalinist oprichnik.

It is enough to take any of his articles, speeches, analyze any of his deeds - and you can clearly see in this person an uncomplicated confidence that he is from a cohort of "new people". This means that they have the right to decide for others — the "former", "old regime" — where to go, in what society to live, and, accordingly, to execute a speedy trial and reprisals against those who think differently. The lines from Boris Pasternak involuntarily come to mind: "... A new man has run over us with the cart of the project... And the strong promise to get rid of / The last plagues that overwhelmed us."

It is quite difficult to write about Mehlis. Jean-Jacques Rousseau immediately comes to mind with his postulate that man is by nature good. And in fact, our hero was not born an executioner, not an inquisitor. After all, he also had a dewy path along which he took his first hesitant steps, and a bruise received in a boyish duel of honor, and the first feeling that makes anyone at least a little higher, nobler.

But what happened next? Where does such a gloomy, downright executioner glory come from? And is it by chance that the wide lifetime fame of Mehlis turned into almost complete oblivion after death? Far from it. He himself became a hostage of that political and ideological system, the formation of which he devoted so much effort to.

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He got into the environment of party functionaries just at the time when active participants in the October Revolution, party members with pre-revolutionary experience, authoritative keepers of the traditions of Bolshevism, who, by their very existence, reminded Stalin of the groundlessness of his claims to absolute power, were removed from leadership positions. . For the apparatchiks who came to replace them, the former disadvantages - meager party experience, lack of ties with the "Leninist guard" - turned into big pluses in the eyes of the first general secretary. It seems that it was during this period that the personality of Mehlis finally took shape. If at one time, perhaps, he professed romantic revolutionary ideals, now he considered it good to part with them, becoming a complete functionary. The norms of party comradeship finally gave way to loyalty and flattery in relation to the "first person", and it was not the decisions of the party bodies that acquired the leading force, but the instructions of the master, Stalin, who increasingly usurped power.

As never before, the qualities that distinguished him turned out to be in demand - fearless cruelty, the ability to shift responsibility from oneself to others, a passion for hardware games, and on the other hand, boundless devotion, zealous diligence and the ability to predict the desires of one's idol.

Formally belonging to the circle of leaders of the "second echelon", without occupying the highest party and state posts, Mekhlis, nevertheless, entered the closest Stalinist circle and managed for at least two decades to possess power capabilities that were incommensurable in scale. with those that flowed from the status of his posts. This phenomenon characterizes one of the most important features of the Stalinist power mechanism — the existence in the political elite of such a group of functionaries, which the author, based on the methods of recruitment and the features of its functioning, defines as a "shadow" sub-elite. It included nomenclature figures, whose real power was determined not so much by the posts they held in the party and the state, but by informal, unregulated closeness to Stalin, trusting relations with

him.

In this context, the personality of Mekhlis is of particular interest, as a typical personality, significant in terms of identifying internal,

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hidden springs of the mechanism of power, understanding the essence of the shadow, as if from behind the political scenes, methods and forms of exercising power.

Anyone who undertakes to assert that everything that Mekhlis did belongs exclusively to the past and today satisfies only idle curiosity will meet the author's fundamental objection. We know a lot about the 1920s and 1950s, about the terrible bloody harvest that the Moloch of Stalinism took off. But have we received exhaustive answers to all the questions that concern Russian society? For example: how did the Bolshevik elite manage for so long to pass off its cult surrogates as genuine democracy? Why did the magic of socially attractive slogans turn into the power of rulers for the masses of the people, who themselves trampled on the principles they proclaimed with cynicism? What kind of evil forces lurked in the heads and souls of those who, with the happiness of future generations, justified violence against their contemporaries, driving them into the "bright realm of freedom" through the construction of communism?

In a painful search for answers, we are thinking not only and not so much about the past, but about the fate of Russian democracy, about a reasonable balance in our life of politics and morality, social class interests and universal values, strength and law, the interests of the state and the interests of the individual. In a word, about what is important for any society at all times.

Searches in this direction are all the more relevant for modern Russia, because the past tenaciously grabs the present day. It is sometimes difficult to get rid of the idea that other politicians of the 20th] century are literally copying the mores and actions of the Stalinist entourage. Don't we have people like Mekhlis in our power - masters of political intrigue, incompetent, with deformed moral principles, who have taken leadership positions thanks to behind-the-scenes influence on the leader of the country and at the same time ignoring the interests of society?

There is only one way out: relying on the lessons of the past, develop a mechanism for the formation of power that would close the way for the "gray cardinals" into it.

In recent years, many articles, essays, and books have been published about those who, like Mekhlis, were in the immediate Stalinist circle and carried out the guidelines of the leader, L.P. Beria, K.E. Voroshilov, N.I. Ezhov, S.M. Kirov, G.M. Malenkov, A.I. Mikoyan

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no, V.M. Molotov, N.S. Khrushchev and others. In this series, the book about Lev Mekhlis will not be superfluous. For its hero symbolizes what our society experienced in the recent past and from which in many respects it has not yet been freed even today. And it must be released. The difficult, internally contradictory, but so necessary process of parting with the legacy of Stalinism requires, finally, to erase this "blank spot" as well. And without an objective analysis of the Stalinist elite, to solve this problem difficult.

The bulk of the documents on the basis of which the book was written are taken from the archives of the Archive of the President of the Russian Federation (AP RF), the State Archive of the Russian Federation (GARF), the Russian State Military Archive (RGVA), the Russian State Archive of Contemporary History (RGANI), the Russian State Archive of Socio-Political History (RGASPI), the Central Archive of the Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation (TsAMO RF), the Central Archive of the FSB RF (CA FSB RF).

Let us make a special reservation: the book does not pretend to be an exhaustive presentation of the life path and multilateral party and state activities of L.Z. Mekhlis. These are just pages of the political biography of a major functionary of the CPSU(b) against the historical background of the 1920s-1950s. The author tried to be objective and unbiased, although he does not dare to call himself impartial.

Chapter 1

IN THE COMMISSIONER'S LEATHER JACKET

LOVELY ODESSA HID IN THE FOG...

Several youthful photographs of Lev Mekhlis have been preserved, and each of them is a blow to a later stereotype. It was only later, in the 1930s, from the pages of Pravda, Krasnaya Zvezda and newspapers of a smaller caliber, from time to time a big-nosed tribune with a hat of pitch hair, hard eyes, in the uniform of Stalin's officials - a paramilitary jacket, fastened tightly. In the meantime, in his native Odessa, he goes to the photograph of Malkus, which is on Richelieu Street in Feldman's house, a young man in a blouse and a short jacket, the owner of a magnificent head of hair with a neat parting in the middle, like a clerk's.

He is the clerk, more precisely, the clerk. "For 2.5 years I served for hire in Katz's office in Odessa," Mekhlis indicated in a questionnaire filled out in November 1921 upon admission to the People's Commissariat of Workers' and Peasants' Inspection. "I started working at the age of 14-15 - I worked in an office for about 3 years, then gave lessons," he specified in his autobiography in 1927!

It is striking that archival materials are very stingy with information about the origin of Lev Zakharovich, his family, occupations before the revolution, and party affiliation. Moreover, in a number of documents executed by himself, he contradicted himself. Is it by chance? So, in the "Basic Map of a Communist", compiled in April 1919, he names Russian as his native language, while indicating that he also speaks "Jewish". In the military

'RGVA, f. 40884, op. 1, d. 2, l. 8; d. 11, l. 1.

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On a ticket issued on March 11, 1926, according to its owner, it is written: nationality - Jewish, but does not speak the national language, considers Russian to be his native language. Is it because the nationality was obscured because by that time Mekhlis was already working in the Central Committee of the RCP (b) under Stalin, whose anti-Semitism was not a secret for those around him.

Only indirectly can one judge the family in which Lev grew up. In the same "Basic Map of a Communist" he indicates that he received an education at home "according to the full course of a real school." It is unlikely that a poor Jewish family could afford this. It is doubtful, however, that she was prosperous, since the teenager earned extra money in the office and private lessons.

In Mekhlis's papers, there is one more - and also not direct - indication of parents. Already at the end of the war in 1945, he, being a member of the Military Council of the Carpathian Military District, wrote to his wife from Stanislav: "There were some relatives on my mother's side here - by the name of Derzhanko ... An old woman lives in poverty. Gave her some money."

Odessa was the cauldron in which the brew of "two-ten" languages was boiling. Russians, Ukrainians, Jews, Greeks, Moldavians - their peaceful neighborhood was ensured by the coincidence of production, trade, and simply everyday interests. However, from time to time the balance was disturbed by pogroms of Jewish houses and shops. Here to grow up, to grow up - like it or not - had to be faster. At the dawn of the new century, Mekhlis joined a detachment of Jewish workers' self-defense, which fought off the Black Hundreds in the Moldavanka region.

The city with a traditional rebellious attitude became one of the centers of the first Russian revolution. Its events did not bypass, of course, Leo, but archival documents do not allow us to say what exactly this was expressed in. Much later, in various propaganda materials in connection with the elections to the Supreme Soviets of the USSR and the RSFSR, in newspaper publications of the 30s and 40s, it was persistently repeated that with the advent of 1905, the young man actively attended rallies, participated in armed clashes with the police. It seems that he was even arrested on charges of possession of weapons and sentenced to imprisonment, but then, as a minor, he was pardoned. However, it draws attention to the fact that this fact, clearly advantageous for any revolutionary, Mekhlis in his autobiographies

did not indicate. Isn't this the product of the imagination of obliging biographers, who made sure that the service record of a high-ranking party functionary looked more impressive? One way or another, but in 1919, answering the question of the questionnaire, was he subjected to persecution for the revolutionary

activity, Lev Zakharovich mentioned a much more modest episode: "In 1907, in Odessa, he was arrested and beaten in the Kherson district."

There is also another entry relating to the events of the same 1907 - the entry of Mekhlis into the Jewish Social Democratic Labor Party "Poalei Zion" and work in its Odessa organization'. It must be said that Lev Zakharovich did not mention this page anywhere in his biography, except for two or three questionnaires written at the dawn of his political apprenticeship. And we believe it is no coincidence either.

In Soviet literature, Poalei Zion (translated from Hebrew as "Workers of Zion") was considered as one of the organizations created in Russia by the leaders of international Zionism along with the Bund ("General Jewish Workers Union in Lithuania, Poland and Russia"), the "Independent Jewish Workers' Party" ("NERP") and the like. Moreover, there was a plan to subsequently unite these organizations precisely around Poalei Zion, which took shape in 1905.

The Poleationists defended the non-class, and therefore sharply opposed by the Bolshevik Party, demand for territorial autonomy "for the entire Jewish people" in Palestine. It was precisely this Zionist character of the movement of the Bundists, Zionists and other supporters of the parties of the "Jewish proletariat" that Lenin blamed them and explained the sharpness of the ideological differences with them. Approved in 1921, the circular of the Central Committee of the RCP(b) on the attitude towards the Jewish Communist Party Poalei Zion, the successor of the ESDLP, contained a direct demand: "A decisive ideological struggle must be waged against the EKP."

'RGVA, f. 40884, op. 1, d. 2, l. 1. 2 See: Romanenko A.Z. On the class essence of Zionism. L., 1986. S. 89-90.

3 Program documents of national political parties and organizations of Russia (late 19th century — 1917). M., 1996. S. 92-93.

&RGASPI, f. 17, op. 86, d. 234, l. 18.

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Therefore, after October 1917, it was not at all in the interests of Lev Mekhlis to testify against himself, to remind him that he was in Poalei Zion and, therefore, was with the Bolsheviks on opposite sides of the barricades. On the contrary, as soon as the opportunity to join the Communist Party presented itself, he was not slow to take advantage of it. By the way, the erroneous assertion that before joining the RCP(b) he was a member of the Menshevik Party became commonplace.

The pre-October biography of Mekhlis, as a revolutionary, is rather thin. In addition to the episode at the police station, there seems to be nothing to remember. No matter how hard the biographers tried later, retouching the past of a prominent party functionary, their successes turned out to be very modest for one simple reason: neither in February, nor even in October 1917, Mekhlis showed himself in anything special.

In 1911, he was called up for military service in the 2nd Grenadier Artillery Brigade. I pulled the strap, as he himself wrote, at the "point of horses". "First, he served for a year in guard duty, then he was awarded the rank of bombardier (corresponds to the modern corporal. - Y.R.)," Mekhlis unexpectedly recalled that time in 1942 at one of the meetings of the Military Political Propaganda Council at the Main Political Directorate of the Red Army. At the same time, comparing the work with junior commanders in the tsarist and Red armies, I drew a conclusion not in favor of the latter.

With the outbreak of the First World War, he ended up on the Southwestern Front, in the 11th Army. But he was also increasingly busy with the maintenance of the horse stock. There is no information about the participation of Lev Zakharovich in the battles. Of course, this is not a reason for irony or reproaches: the person served where the authorities determined. But here's what the thought does not leave: it was during these years of military service that

Mekhlis's character became ossified, his will was tempered, an imperious, sharp, categorical nature took shape. Here lay the first stones in the foundation of the soon-to-be "commissariat", ruthlessness not only towards strangers, but also towards one's own. Under the influence of whom and what was this process going on?

The February Revolution found Lev in Belaya Tserkov. A photograph has been preserved: in a marine uniform, a mustache à la Budyonny, large, confidently looking eyes. All some kind of tightly knocked down, like a spring, ready to straighten. Not a boy - a husband. Yes and summer

no longer youthful - 28.

And behind him - nothing special: no ranks, no orders. However, it is for the best, because "their nobility" now turned out to be not held in high esteem. Here a different path had to be chosen. Mekhlis was well educated for his time, he has a reputation as a front-line soldier. And here is the first step - he was elected to the soldiers' committee of the unit. When a council of workers and socialist deputies was formed in Belaya Tserkov, he was delegated there, to the Committee for the Protection of Order, which he soon headed.

Our hero did not accidentally show a zeal for politics. He quickly realized what a chance the revolution offered him, a Jew doomed under the old regime to spend his whole life somewhere beyond the Pale of Settlement. Suffice it to say that in the officer corps of the imperial army by the beginning of the 20th century there were only three Jewish officers with a rank no higher than a captain. Looking ahead, let's say that, at least in the military line, Lev Zakharovich used his chance in full: in the Red Army he became one of the five army commissars of the 1st rank (besides him - Ya.B. Gamarnik, A.I. Zaporozhets, P.A. Smirnov, E.A. Shchadenko) - this is the highest military-political rank corresponded to the combined arms rank of army general.

But here's the bad luck: as soon as I felt a taste for struggle, for social work, - and on you, the military unit was disbanded. "Home!" - Leo decides, confident that he will find something to do there.

He arrived in Odessa in January 1918. I immediately decided to join the secretariat of Rumcherod, which was the abbreviation for the Central Executive Committee of the Councils of Soldiers, Sailors, Workers and Peasants' Deputies of the Romanian Front, the Black Sea Fleet and the Odessa Military District. True, he did not have a chance to stay in his native city for long: on March 14, Odessa was occupied by German and Austrian troops. Mekhlis, together with Rumcherod employees, leaves for the Crimea on military transport, then ends up in Yeysk, where he participates in the establishment of Soviet power.

Here he was accepted into the RCP (b). Lev Zakharovich joined the winning party and was not mistaken. Of course, this did not guarantee a career yet, but, as it turned out over time, the first step towards climbing the political Olympus was taken. Much now depended on how quickly yesterday's Poleitivist would accept the ideology

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Bolshevism, as long as he has the readiness to put it into practice without hesitation. Mekhlis proved to be a capable student.

In May of the same 1918, he first came to Moscow. True, not for long. Lev Zakharovich will finally return to the Mother See in three years to make a political career. In the meantime, he is an inconspicuous rank and file of the party, one in a million.

On party mobilization, he was sent to Ukraine. In January of the following year, he participated in the liberation of Kharkov - the then capital - from the Austrians and Germans. He was left in the city for economic work, was engaged in the restoration of the local railway junction. When, in connection with the offensive of the troops of General A.I. Denikin announced the mobilization of the communists to the front, the time has come for the Mekhlis to get in line.

IN THE 46TH STRELKOVA

On April 3, 1919, the political secretary of the Revolutionary Military Council of the Ukrainian Front sent him to the disposal of the RVS of the operational group of the Kharkov direction. And seven days later, the newcomer was appointed political commissar of the reserve march brigade. Note: Lev Zakharovich did not get to the front as a simple Red Army soldier, but after a short time he became the commissar of the division.

Commissars of the Civil War... How long have party propagandists and politicized scientists painted their image in ideal colors! Answering the question of young people, to make a life with whom, they named the names of Klim Voroshilov, Dmitry Furmanov, Nikolai Markin, Rozalia Zemlyachka, Konstantin Yurenev ... With the fall of the CPSU, historians and publicists were able to take a closer look at this famous generation of "leather jackets": often combat experience — the bare minimum, but there is some general education, the ability to instill actual political slogans into the consciousness of the masses, extreme revolutionary maximalism. And - importantly - the party card "at the heart." As a sign of the supreme trust of the ruling party. As a pass to far from ordinary posts in the army.

It is clear that among this category of Party workers there were different people: both zealots for the idea of building a new life, and ordinary opportunists. That is why elementary justice does not allow speaking about them in excellent tones, as it has been done for decades. Head of the Political Directorate of the Red Army in the early 1920s, member of the Revolutionary Military Council of the Republic S.I. Gusev was forced, speaking of the Civil War, to admit: "The functions of the commissar are comprehensive, the powers are enormous, the rights are almost unlimited ..."

This view of practice was shared by historians of the 1920s. N.N. Kharitonov wrote: "It turned out to be absolutely impossible to cover and precisely formulate all the multifaceted activities of the military commissar with his unlimited powers and comprehensive functions"!

Therefore, the main functions of military commissars were formulated only in the most general form: control over the commander, very often a former officer; direct work on the construction and organization of military units; struggle for severe discipline, against cowardice, desertion, laxity, cowardice; personal participation in battles, exemplary performance of military and party duty; leadership of all party and political-educational work.

Naturally, the military commissars themselves experienced serious difficulties with a clear definition of their powers and the scope of their activities. Not every one of those who received this terrible weapon in their hands knew how and tried to use it wisely.

Judging by Mekhlis's first steps in the new field, he clearly understood that the advances given by the party must be paid not out of fear, but out of conscience. They will turn a blind eye to cruelty, which is easily written off as sacred hatred of the class enemy, they will only lightly reproach them for excesses, but they will not forgive passivity, softness, and the loss of a political face. In the new case, he undoubtedly also saw a long-awaited chance to advance, to draw attention to himself. After all, he is already thirty, the age for those turbulent times is more than mature, but he

Kharitonov N.N. The political apparatus of the Red Army. M., 1929.

E. 39.

walks in beginners. And finally, he was entrusted with a responsible area.

The new commissar did not stay in the reserve brigade. The smooth course of events was disrupted by N.A. Skoropadsky, who previously served in the Central Rada, and then hetman. Grigoriev, head of the 6th Soviet Rifle Division. Refusing to go to the front with the entrusted division, he raised an armed rebellion that engulfed the Kiev, Poltava, Kharkov and Yekaterinoslav provinces. On May 10, 1919, Grigoriev was outlawed, but before decisive measures were taken to crush the rebellion, the rebels managed to capture



Yekaterinoslav, where Mekhlis was located along with the brigade. In the city, the Grigorievites found a "fifth column", while the Reds had few forces - an instructor school and a reserve marching brigade.

Seeing the superiority of the enemy, the brigade commissar selected two dozen fighters and fought his way to the Dnieper. There he met the arriving replenishment and again rushed into the frying pan of battle. Two days later, the Grigorievites were thrown back from the city, the uprising was crushed.

Judging by subsequent events, the role of the military commissar did not go unnoticed. Moreover, the course of hostilities required the mobilization of all possible forces. Grigoriev's adventure was taken advantage of by General Denikin, who seized the initiative in the Donbas region. In connection with the sharply aggravated situation, the Revolutionary Military Council of the Southern Front ordered all political workers to be seconded to the front line.

From the reserve brigade, Mekhlis was sent with a group of communists to the 14th army, having strengthened the 2nd international regiment created by him by the party organization, which at that time was fighting with Denikin. A report was soon sent to the head of the political department of the army: Mekhlis assigned the communists "to the weakest company of the international regiment as privates, while he himself ... was in chains and in intelligence services".

In his first steps on the military-political path, the features of that style are already visible, which in the pre-war and war years will bring gloom to the future head of the Main Political Directorate of the Red Army even in the far from sentimental military-party establishment.

I RGVA, f. 40884, op. 1, d. 36, l. 29.

new glory. He clashed with commanders, being suspicious of military experts (later this would be expressed in rejection of the very principle of one-man command). Wherever possible, he created party cells, mercilessly shook up the cadres, preferring to implant workers who were personally devoted to him. He did not shy away from assault. True, in extreme situations he showed great energy and determination. The command noticed it too.

In early July 1919, Mekhlis was sent to the Poltava Group of Forces and appointed political commissar of the 3rd combat sector and the 46th division, in which he later fought until the end of the Civil War. In his mandate, words caressing ambition appear: "All revolutionary, military, civil and railway authorities and administrations are obliged to render comrade. Mekhlis all assistance in the performance of the duties assigned to him.

In this position, Mekhlis replaced I.I. Mints, future academician, sworn historian of the Great October Revolution. It must be admitted that the new commissar inherited a poorly organized economy. "Slovenliness and freemen" were inherited from Mintz, we read in a telegram sent from the division to the political department of the army headquarters. The situation in the division as a whole was not the best either. "The general condition of the units, in terms of their combat capability, with the exception of the 406th regiment, was very low," Mekhlis and division chief A.N. Lengovsky, who received a simultaneous appointment. — The division was distinguished by its partisan appearance, with partisan commanders in the majority and with partisan traditions. The political state of the units was below any criticism. In some parts, for example, in the 410th regiment ... it was risky to call oneself a communist. Most of the military-political committees of division units, both regiments and brigades, are not in the field. Political departments and commissars "did not have influence on the masses and could not show themselves in the sense of political education"! .

Knowing how Mekhlis acted subsequently, one can assume that this assessment was not without the desire to shift some of the responsibility onto the predecessor. But how

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'RGVA, f. 40884, op. 1, d. 36, l. 31-32.

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Documents show that many units of the entire 14th Army sinned with low combat capability and morale (commander A.I. Egorov). The political commissar of the infantry inspection at the Revolutionary Military Council of the Southern Front reported on September 17, 1919: "The loud names of brigades and divisions hide behind them the low meager size of the units, which have recently lost many killed and wounded, and for the most part deserted ... There are many in the ranks armies are also all sorts of adventurers, people without family or tribe, lovers of easy money, and so on. In terms of combat, they are all suitable material, but, unfortunately, the moral character leaves much to be desired.

If, the inspector complained, they still somehow exact a penalty from the higher command staff of the army, then the lower one does not bear any responsibility. Red Army soldiers do not respect mid-level commanders, they are not obeyed, there is no question of any hint of discipline. Similarly, in a combat situation: the fighters do not follow orders, and everyone acts at their own peril and risk. Those who are braver shoot endlessly and anywhere, while others drop their weapons and try to hide.

"It is my deep conviction," the inspector concluded, "that units of the 14th Army are not a combat-ready unit, and therefore the best measure would be to withdraw all units to the rear and replace them with fresh and strong units. Politically, it is necessary to take measures to combat the desertion of political workers and the claims of representatives of the "Soviet bourgeoisie" to a privileged position."

The representative of the Revolutionary Military Council of the Front touched especially on the economy of Mekhlis: "A considerable percentage of this category (46th division) are typical bandits, thugs, among them gambling for very large sums flourishes, there are frequent cases of theft, robbery, they talk between yourself in your "thieves" jargon, and so on. (410th regiment). Political and educational work among them is extremely difficult. According to the head of the political department of the division, the attitude towards the communists is hostile, and the commissars appointed to these units are sometimes forced to flee to save their lives.

! Khodakov I. My hut is on the edge, I don't know anything ... // Independent military

review, 2005, 14 October.

Knowing this state of affairs, is it any wonder that the 46th division, retreating along with the entire army, surrendered Poltava. "The reason for the shameful retreat," Mekhlis declared in the very first order he wrote upon arrival at the division, "is our disorganization, susceptibility to panic spread by provocateurs and cowards ... We must all pull ourselves up, both commanders and red army soldiers. We must meekly take on the entire burden of the most severe discipline.

The heaviness of the hand of the new commissar in the division was immediately felt. First of all, the political department, the special department and the revolutionary tribunal were strengthened, the commanders and political workers, about whom there was doubt, were removed from their posts. Instead of them, Lev Zakharovich appointed trusted people. In relation to "traitors, self-seekers and cowards," he acted harshly, which the military press did not fail to recall even twenty years later. The author of an article published in 1939, under the characteristic heading "Fighting revolutionary traditions of military commissars - a great force," offered readers a story truly in the style of a Western.

In the 406th regiment, a "gang of bandits" was operating, led by battalion commander S. He killed the regiment commander and took his place. The intervention of the brigade commander did not give any result. Then Mekhlis came to the regiment. In S.'s hut, he discovered a real gangster den - booze, revelry, half-naked women ... Inviting everyone to leave the room in a voice that could not stand any objections, the political committee remained face to face with S. There was no shooting, Mekhlis assures. But, of course, they grabbed weapons, threatened each other. Let's give Lev Zakharovich his due: if he showed weakness, his head would not be taken off. And so, S., retreating before the commissar's strong-willed pressure, surrendered, and even without an escort was escorted to the headquarters, where he was arrested.

A document preserved in the archive - a telegram from Mekhlis to the political department of the 14th Army - allows us to judge how he saw the situation in the 406th regiment in 1939, in 1919, and what he did to urgently improve the situation. In connection with the losses suffered, the situation in the regiment was "very serious," he reported. Ten political workers were "knocked out", the commander of the unit is in such a moral state that he cannot lead. This is transferred to the Red Army mass, as a result, one of the battalions refused to take up a combat position. Among the urgent measures taken, Mekhlis listed more

marching company, sending several officers and political workers, as well as "gifts of cigarettes". The only way to save the situation, the division commissar insisted, was to send an additional number of political workers specifically to this regiment.

He did not stand on ceremony with the "elements of decomposition" - he dispersed the former headquarters, filtered out the party organization. Readiness right there, on the spot, to resolve any issue, he was not to occupy. But did he still remain a commissar, did he know how to act not so much by order as by the force of persuasion? His bosses were forced to think about this. "Mekhlis is a brave man, capable of bringing inspiration during the battle, striving for dangerous places on the front," this is how the political department of the 14th Army characterized him in August 1919. "But as a political committee, he has no political tact and does not know his rights and obligations."

The archive has brought to us one more such attestation. It is all the more significant because, say, the encouragement by Mekhlis of corporal punishment of Red Army soldiers is considered in it by no means as an emergency, but only as an "abnormality". Several months of work were enough for A.N. Voitov to earn the following reputation: "Comrade. Mekhlis is primarily a fighting "soldier" and an energetic worker. Lack of tact and stubbornness greatly diminish his merits as a commissar, making him difficult to work with. He does not have the political, "commissar" experience necessary for the commissar of a division, which is why some abnormalities are observed in his work (the cult of the Red Army soldiers themselves's ramrod-down reprisals against delinquent comrades). Nevertheless, with all its shortcomings, it can be said that Mekhlis, in comparison with the commissars of other divisions, as far as I know them, is satisfactory due to the general level of his development, energy and knowledge of military affairs, and therefore, for my part, I consider possible replacement of Mekhlis only by a commissar who is fully appropriate for his appointment.

The above-mentioned political commissar of the infantry inspection at the RVS of the Southern Front also paid attention to Lev Za-

'RGVA, f. 40884, op. 1, d. 31, l. 4. 2 RGVA, collection of personal files, d. 37, l. 17.

Kharovich: "The commissar of the 46th division, comrade. Mekhlis is a young energetic worker, but too hot-tempered. Friction was noticed between him and the division commander, and to resolve the conflict that had arisen, a member of the Revolutionary Military Council of the 14th Army, comrade, went to the division. Kieselstein. In the 46th division, comrade. Mekhlis has been working recently, so it is impossible to judge his work by the state of the division. As a negative side, it is necessary to note the use by Comrade Mekhlis of punishing Red Army soldiers by beating them with ramrods.

Undoubtedly, such assessments reflected the specifics of the time: the atmosphere of the Civil War with its extreme bitterness and focus not on the rule of law, but on the "revolutionary consciousness", the lack of well-trained personnel, the low morale of not only the rank and file, but also the command and commissar staff. They also testified to the ambiguous process of becoming Lev Mekhlis in the position of political commissar, which combined both successes and achievements, and obvious failures. It is impossible not to note the insight of the deputy head of the political department of the army, Voitov, who managed to discern the beginnings of the style behind the first steps of the subordinate, which brought the future head of the GlavPU of the Red Army an unkind fame.

From the second half of May 1919, the formations of the Southern Front fought heavy defensive battles, gradually retreating into the interior of the country. In early July, the Central Committee of the RCP (b) recognized the front of the fight against

Denikin in charge of the Soviet Republic, setting before the commissars the task of persistently carrying out political work among the troops, directing it towards the eradication of laxity, strengthening the order and spirit of the army.

Mehlis acted according to these guidelines. In his work, he pressed on the creation of new party organizations, expanding his asset with all his might. According to the report of the political department of the army, on October 3, in the 46th rifle division, 19 party organizations were functioning, having increased by 4 times in three months, which united 109 party members and 203 sympathizers. A school of political literacy and a club were opened, and almost three dozen control and economic commissions were elected. This activity is appreciated. By order of the political department of the Revolutionary Military Council of the 14th Army, Mehlis was commended "for dedication and excellent work."

Probably, the commissar of the 46th division did not completely ignore the criticism of a higher political body,  
tried to master not only chi-

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one hundred command, but also political methods of work. However, the harsh conditions of the civil war, the heterogeneity of both command and political cadres and the rank and file, who came to replenish and often carried with them the mood of a partisan freemen, the need, sometimes by the most severe methods, to restore order in units made our hero even more cruel and inflexible. In difficult cases, he did not look for compromise ways, preferring to go into open conflict.

So, in a telegram sent to the political department of the army, Mekhlis poses a reasonable question: if he, along with the division commander, is responsible for the state of the division, why is the general summary sent to the higher headquarters without his signature? Why was the political department withdrawn from his subordination? He also protested against the embellishment of the mood of the units in the report, demanded not to hide the case that the town of Romny was raided not by some third-party robbers, but by Red Army soldiers.  
divisions.

This document is interesting in that it gives an idea of the commissar practice of the Mehliis. Firstly, having learned that the report sent "upstairs" is biased, he is not afraid, as they say, to take dirty linen out of the hut. Secondly, it is clear that Lev Zakharovich prefers to judge the situation in the units personally, and not only from reports. And finally, decisions, most often very cool ones, are not shifted onto other people's shoulders. For the low combat readiness of the combined regiment of the first brigade, the battalion commander and political committee were demoted to the Red Army and sent to the front line. As for the robbery, it was stopped by military commissar-46 by shooting the instigator.

And here is another documentary evidence of Mekhlis's growing confidence that he is acting as he should. The story is connected with the appointment in October 1919 of the head of undercover intelligence of the division. The commissar of the intelligence department of the army headquarters, Efremov, insisted on the candidacy of a certain Malyshev. Mekhlis, having incriminating evidence against him, categorically objected. Then Efremov, with the consent of S.P. Natsarenus, invited Mekhlis to take on the duties of the latter before the appointment of the head of the division's undercover intelligence.

It is impossible, follows the answer. Not only is the workload of the commissar's own work extremely extreme ("from early morning until 4-5 am, without any breaks for lunch, etc."), but also  
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pros is put precisely in such a plane that I have to accept the candidacy of the person whom  
I don't know at all," Mehliis sharpens the question. And he resorts to an ultimatum: "The situation that has arisen... authoritatively demands that I be expelled from the division, because [because] I am becoming incapacitated. I am raising the question of my recall from the division not with the aim of obtaining an indulgence from the authorities, but quite seriously and I ask you to consider it carefully.

In the end, the collision was successfully resolved, and Mekhlis remained in the division. Nevertheless, in such ultimatums it is easy to notice the very partisanism that he took up arms against, as soon as it manifested itself in others.

On October 11, the troops of the Southern Front launched a counteroffensive. The famous Oryol-Kromskoye battle flared up. The 46th Rifle Division, led by R.P. Eideman. Heavy fighting went on with varying success, accompanied by tangible losses. And yet, by January 10, 1920, the troops of the Red Army reached the line of Zhmerinka, Znamenka, Ekaterinoslav, Aleksandrovsk, Berdyansk, the northern coast of the Sea of Azov, Rostov-on-Don. The Southern Front was renamed the Southwestern Front, and the 46th Rifle Division became part of the 13th Army, which had been greatly weakened in previous battles. The central authorities made sure that on the eve of the decisive, as one would like to believe at that time, battles, the front received the necessary replenishment.

The army was entrusted with the task of preventing the withdrawal of the army corps of General Ya.A. Slashchev to the Crimea and defeat him in Northern Tavria. But it was not possible to intercept the whites. By January 24, only one 46th division reached the Perekop and Chongar isthmuses. At first, she was even able to take Perekop and the Armenian Bazaar (Armyansk). True, a very high price had to be paid for this: only the 407th rifle regiment lost up to 70 percent in killed, wounded and captured.

personnel.

About the role of Mekhlis in these events in November 1937, during the days of his nomination as a candidate for deputies of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, Literaturnaya Gazeta spoke with immoderate enthusiasm through the mouth of a certain F.A. Oleshko. During the days of the battles with Wrangel, the commissar of the battalion, which was part of the 46th division, he told how, thanks to Lev Zakharovich, the Whites found themselves uncomfortable behind the Chongar fortifications and Sivash: "Comrade. Mekhlis found the river Chongar, which flowed

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in Sivash. The rivulet was frozen, through it he ferried part of the 137th brigade. Part went behind enemy lines, captured the headquarters of the whites with the generals, 18 guns, several dozen machine guns, a huge amount of rifles and ammunition ... "

The picture painted is absolutely incredible, given that during the battles near Perekop on January 22-24, 1920, Slashchev had only 1800-2000 bayonets, 1000 sabers and 32 guns at his disposal. True, the command of the 46th division was able to deploy even less - 1210 bayonets and 8 guns. Therefore, it was not possible to advance deep into the Crimea on the shoulders of the enemy. Slashchev, having collected all the reserves, pushed the Reds over the isthmus. After an additional regrouping of the 13th Army in early March, they tried to launch a new offensive, even broke through the defenses on the Perekop Isthmus, but were again driven back.

Almost a quarter of a century later, his colleague Captain I. Bakhtin unexpectedly reminded Lev Zakharovich about the drama of those ancient events. In February 1943, he ventured to write to a member of the Military Council of the Volkhov Front, Mekhlis: "Do you remember, dear general, the same melting February between Yushun and the Armenian Bazaar in 1920 and our two lonely figures firing at Slashchev's cavalry, while our retreating units did not come to their senses and did not lie down chain with us."

The actions of the 46th Rifle Division and the army as a whole were adversely affected by an acute shortage of combat-ready units and an extremely unsatisfactory supply of ammunition and food. And this at a time when the personnel of the division did not leave the battles. By February 1920, its number had decreased to 3 thousand people. Mekhlis literally bombarded the political department and the revolutionary military council of the army with demanding telegrams. On February 21, once again reporting in detail on the plight of the division, he insisted that the political department bring "to the attention of the prerevolutionary military council [a] of the republic in order to bring all those responsible to account for the complete weakening of the combat power of the division's units."

A favorable moment for the defeat of the troops of General P.N. Wrangel at the beginning of 1920 was thus missed. White was not slow to take advantage of this. Having accumulated

' Golubev A. Civil War 1918-1920. M., 1932. S. 123.

by the spring of force, in mid-April, they struck at the formations of the 13th Army. On April 14, south of Melitopol, in the Kirillovka area, an assault force was landed from the sea as part of the Alekseevsky infantry regiment and the Kornilov artillery battery. The enemy sought to cut the Melitopol-Bolshoi Utlyuk railroad, along which the entire 13th Army was supplied. All this happened in the immediate rear of the 46th division.

Her new boss Yu.V. Sablin led the destruction of the landing force. He was successfully assisted by Mehlis. A detachment formed by the commissar from units of the Melitopol garrison and armed workers stopped the landing force, and then cut off its escape routes. The hastily deployed 409th Regiment protected the railroad. Only at the cost of heavy losses did the remnants of the Wrangel landing force manage to break through along the coast from the side of the Arabat Spit to Genichesk, to the rear of the 411th regiment. On the streets of the city, the rest of the paratroopers were eliminated.

Some of the details of that battle were given by Pravdist, a small circulation of the printing plant of the newspaper Pravda, in the issue of September 21, 1933 (we will keep in mind the possibility that the authors of the publication somewhat flattered their boss: Lev Zakharovich by that time was already chief editor). So, even the day before, the commissar of the division disarmed the partisan detachment "Zaporizhzhya Sich" near Genichesk, with an "anarchist smell", selected the best fighters for himself, and "the worst hunt for the "gold-toothed commissar"". Mekhlis did not lose his head during the offensive of the Alekseevites. Having learned that the 411th regiment, to which the Whites went to the rear, was retreating, he galloped towards the fleeing, "brings the regiment to its senses" and leads it to a counterattack. The enemy has a clear advantage - armored cars, strong cavalry, pushing the red infantry in the open steppe. And yet the Whites did not resist.

The division commissar, as division chief Sablin reported to Moscow, "was all the time in the front lines, dragging the Red Army forward into the attack with his personal example." Something, but Mekhlis really did not bow to bullets. He used to walk in chains twenty years later, by the way, also in the Crimea, wearing on his overcoat the insignia of an army commissar of the 1st rank.

Even in the midst of the battle, the commissar felt a sharp blow to his left shoulder. Immobilized, hand filled with pain. But Mehlis is not out of the battle

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walked until Genichesk was in his hands. In the hospital, they later determined - a through wound of the left shoulder with a rifle bullet with significant fragmentation of the bone.

On April 18, the day after the battle, Sablin and Mekhlis received a telegram from the Revolutionary Military Council of the Army stating that they were presented for awarding the Orders of the Red Banner. Then, however, the idea was not implemented. The first Order of the Red Banner appeared with Lev Zakharovich only in 1928, in connection with the 10th anniversary of the Red Army.

The commissar of the 46th division was treated for about two weeks, after which he was sent to the Revolutionary Military Council of the Southwestern Front, where he was "for special assignments" for about three months. It doesn't matter what these orders were. The main thing is that here for the first time two people met and communicated so closely, whose names will often be mentioned together over the next thirty years - Stalin and Mekhlis. Not always around, because I.V. Stalin - namely, he was a member of the Revolutionary Military Council of the South-Western Front - was always immeasurably higher in party and official position, but together. It would not be an exaggeration to say that this meeting largely predetermined the further political fate of Lev Zakharovich. Judging by the fact that the future leader, having returned from the front to Moscow, did not forget about him and brought him closer to him first in the People's Commissariat of the Workers' and Peasants' Inspectorate, and then in the Central Committee of the Party, Mekhlis already at the first meeting managed to

like Stalin. Why not? Like Iosif Vissarionovich, he was extremely distrustful of military experts. Ambitious, strong-willed. He is not inclined to discussions about and without it, he is assertive, he goes straight to the goal. And at the same time, he is punctual, diligent, and does not ask unnecessary questions.

Mekhlis himself, talking with a member of the Politburo of the Central Committee of the party, a People's Commissar, a person endowed with emergency powers and not afraid to use these powers, probably quickly realized that they were kindred spirits. Later, this helped to find out how to take an ideal position in the environment of the leader - to serve the master faithfully and unquestioningly, to become his shadow, the second "I". Stalin appreciated this kind of devotion.

All this will come later. In the meantime, as a result of the successful June battles, Wrangel's troops, like burning gasoline, became you

pour from the neck of the Crimean isthmuses and spread like fire across the southern Ukrainian steppes. By the end of the month, they controlled the left bank of the Dnieper from the mouth to Kakhovka, and in the northeast they reached almost Aleksandrovsk (Zaporozhye). The 13th Army fought back. It was divided by the Dnieper into two parts - the Right-Bank group, which occupied the defense at the turn from Kherson to Nikopol, and the Left-Bank.

The Red offensive, hastily undertaken in late June and early July, failed. It became clear that condescension towards Wrangel was a bad helper. The High Command of the Red Army undertook to strengthen the Crimean sector of the Southwestern Front. I.P. took command of the 13th Army. Uborevich, the Pravoberezhnaya Group of Forces, which included four divisions, was headed by the former division chief-46 Eideman. Mekhlis was sent to him. On July 22, 1920, Stalin signed a document that read: Mekhlis. Upon receipt of this, you are ordered to go to the Strike Group of the Right-Bank Ukraine for the post of commissar of the aforementioned group.

#### ON THE KAKHOVSKY BROADHEAD

This group was assigned an important role in the upcoming counter-offensive. It was supposed to deliver the main blow from the right bank of the Dnieper to Perekop. Therefore, the command took care of a significant replenishment of its forces and means. On the eve of the fighting, the troops of the group numbered over 14 thousand bayonets and 600 sabers with 44 guns, having received a triple advantage over the enemy. Thus, the scale of Mekhlis's activities also expanded: he had never had to lead such a mass of people.

The crossing of the Dnieper began on the night of August 7. As one of the biographers of Mekhlis described (there is no witness or documentary evidence for this), it was Lev Zakharovich who led the advance detachment. Already in the first half of the day, the forcing was successfully carried out, and a bridgehead was captured in the Kakhovka area. Here, under the guidance of the famous military engineer D.M. Karbyshev immediately began the construction of defensive structures

'RGVA, f. 40884, op. 1, d. 1, l. 3.

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zheny. This turned out to be all the more important because five days later the enemy forced the Pravoberezhnaya group to begin a general retreat to Kakhovka. Here, relying on defensive fortifications and constantly improving them, the Reds managed to stop the enemy. The Kakhovka bridgehead became the stumbling block against which all Wrangel's efforts in this operational direction were shattered.

But this became clear later, but for now the battles unfolded stubbornly here. To prevent the enemy from throwing the Reds into the Dnieper, it was necessary to dig tightly into the ground, build powerful engineering structures. The commander of the group, Eideman (later replaced by the head of the 51st Infantry Division, V.K. Blucher, who arrived from the Eastern Front), entrusted Mekhlis with the rear. And the commissioner did not give rest to anyone.

He literally bombarded the head of the engineering service of the group, the division commanders, the chairman of the Revolutionary Commissariat of Kakhovka with instructions on the need to send people and materials for the speedy construction of fortifications. Often he himself intervened in the course of work, urging the lazy and clumsy.

In 1933, Eideman, who by that time had become the chairman of the central council of Osoaviakhim, in an article published on February 23 by the Pravda newspaper (we recall that it was just Lev Zakharovich who edited it at that time), recalled: bot ... A member of the Revolutionary Military Council of the group, Comrade Mekhlis, who has not yet fully recovered from a recent injury, spent days and nights at the polling stations. Organizes and arranges people”.

Stalin, a member of the Revolutionary Military Council of the Southwestern Front, visited the bridgehead these days. Mekhlis's meeting with him was reflected in the fiction of the early 1950s — S. Golubov's panegyric and artistically weak novel When the Fortresses Don't Surrender. The name of the “enemy of the people” Blucher does not sound here, of course, there is only some nameless and morally “oppressed” commander of the Pravoberezhnaya group, who questions the reality of the pace of work that Stalin set. But Mekhlis is proactive. Pushing aside the silent commander, he himself reports to a member of the RVS front.

... On September 5, the Wrangelites went on the offensive, making an attempt to capture the Kakhovka bridgehead. They brought the Kornilov infantry division into battle, supported by tanks and artillery. Thanks to the well-organized artillery

the enemy did not pass the defense. Mekhlis also participated in repulsing the attack: “As an experienced artilleryman, he himself stood at one gun and ordered the battery to open rapid fire on the rest of the tanks.” Later biographers in the writings of the 1930s and 1940s claimed that the participation of the group commissar even decided the outcome of the battle. Unfortunately, in this case there is no reliable documentary evidence. On the other hand, it is impossible not to notice how the authors of such agitation, in full accordance with the cult tradition that was established in the country in those years, persistently sculpted the image of “a faithful disciple of Comrade. Stalin.”

In September, the 6th Army was formed on the basis of the Pravoberezhnaya Group of Forces and other units. For about two weeks, Mekhlis temporarily acted as a member of the RVS of the army, after which he returned to his former position of military commissar in the 46th rifle division. Downgrade? Obviously, but what was it connected with? Probably, the situation forced the command to disregard Lev Zakharovich's pride. The 46th division, located on the left-bank direction, repelling the breakthrough of the White Drozdov division, suffered such serious losses in mid-September that it had to be withdrawn to the reserve for resupplying. To ensure it, it took the former political commissar, who knew the people and the situation.

Lev Zakharovich again finds himself in Yekaterinoslav. In the city, as I.I. Fedko, the commander of the troops of the Kyiv military district, and in the days of the described events, the commander of division 46, anxiety reigned in connection with the appearance of the Wrangel troops near, the authorities were preparing for the evacuation. It was necessary to bring reassurance and make them believe in the reliability of the city's defense. This mission was taken over by the commissioner. Local proletarians were raised to organize the defense, the division was replenished with volunteers. “The soul and organizer of this work was the commissar of the division, comrade. Mekhlis, - Fedko emphasizes again and again. - The results of this work were reflected in the very first battles with the elite units of the Whites - the Markov and Kornilov divisions. Units of the 46th Rifle Division, brought into battle near Yekaterinoslav, with the singing of the “Internationale”, attacked the whites with bayonets, who were forced to retreat to Zaporozhye in a panic.

Knowing that these lines were born in the atmosphere of 1937, it is difficult to get rid of the idea that a major military leader

during the Civil War, was guided only by the usual desire to reminisce about the battles and campaigns next to Lev Zakharovich. Did he not feel a certain



political order? By the way, in 1935, another, no less famous military leader, Blucher, despite the very transparent hints of Mekhlis, refused to testify to any of his special role in the battles with Wrangel (which will be discussed below). But, perhaps, he refused because it was still 1935, and not 1937?

Waging defensive battles in September-early October 1920, the 13th Army sought to prevent the Wrangel troops from breaking into the Donbass. The goal was achieved, albeit at a huge cost. By mid-October, there was a clear turning point in the situation at the front. M.V. Frunze, who was placed at the head of the newly created Southern Front, in an order dated October 18, especially noted the "valiant behavior of the units of the 46th division", which "disrupted the enemy's plan, crushing the Markov division with a friendly blow, thereby creating a threat to the enemy's Alexandrov crossings and diverting to itself part of the forces intended by the enemy for the further development of success in the decisive Nikopol-Grushevsky direction. Along with the personnel of the division, the commissar of the division also received gratitude from the front commander.

"GIVE CRIMEA!"

The command of the Red Army understood the danger of keeping such a powerful enemy fist in the "soft underbelly" of the Soviet Republic. Before the onset of winter, Frunze was given the task of putting an end to the "black baron" who had retreated to the Crimea. On the morning of October 28, the main forces of the front went on the offensive. As part of the 4th Army, in its third echelon, the 46th division advanced on the auxiliary Chongar direction.

The main line of defense of the whites ran along the Turkish Wall, a structure erected by the Crimean khans, 11 km long and 8 m high. The flanks of the rampart rested on the Black Sea and Sivash and was reinforced by a powerful and complex system of long-term structures. A ditch up to 10 m deep and over 20 m wide was dug in front of the rampart, and two lines of barbed wire were built. The third line of barriers was hidden in the ditch. From the west Perekop

was covered by naval artillery fire, and from the east by the non-freezing Sivash Bay.

The assault on the positions of the Wrangelites in the forehead was fraught with heavy losses and put the accomplishment of the combat mission in jeopardy. Frunze's idea, worked out not without prompting from local residents, to bypass the fortifications on the Chongar Isthmus along the shallow Sivash, was remarkable for its outward simplicity. There was an opportunity to strike at the flank and rear of the enemy. But putting it into practice turned out to be very difficult.

On November 5, Frunze gave the order: "I set the task for the armies of the front: to immediately break into the Crimea along the Crimean isthmuses and, by an energetic offensive to the south, take possession of the entire peninsula, destroying the last refuge of the counter-revolution." The most difficult task fell to the Perekop strike group of Blucher. Two brigades stormed the Turkish Wall in the forehead, the remaining two brigades of the 51st division, together with the 15th and 52nd divisions, were supposed to force the Sivash Gulf, occupy the Lithuanian Peninsula and strike in the direction of Karadzhany and further to Armyansk in the flank and rear to the enemy defending the Turkish Wall.

The operation began on the night of November 7-8. Taking advantage of the fact that due to the strong wind the water level in Sivash fell, the red units in three hours managed to overcome a ten-kilometer bay and, unexpectedly for the enemy, reach the Lithuanian peninsula. A more difficult situation developed for those who stormed the Turkish Wall in the forehead. The heavy artillery and machine-gun fire of the Wrangelites did not allow them to approach the barbed wire. Separate units lost more than half of the composition in the attacks, but did not achieve success.

The situation is critical. "At night, M.V. called me to the apparatus. Frunze," Blucher recalled, "and said: 'The Sivash is flooding with water. Our parts on the Lithuanian peninsula can be cut off. Seize the rampart at all costs.' It took two more desperate assaults before the Blucherites managed to capture the fortifications of the Turkish Wall already at dawn on November 10.

According to Frunze, upon receiving a report of success, it was as if a mountain had fallen off his shoulders. On the same day, the units advancing on the whites from the front from Perekop and delivering a blow to the flank from the direction of Karadzhanay united in the Armyansk region. The enemy no longer had serious fortifications, the best forces of Wrangel were reinforced

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were defeated and fled to the coast. On November 15, units of the 51st division entered Sevastopol and Yalta. And on November 16, upon achieving complete victory, the Southern Front was liquidated.

In the final battles for the Crimea, the 46th Rifle Division did not play any significant role. Accordingly, there is no mention of any participation of Mekhlis in them not only in historical chronicles, but even in propaganda materials. We meet with him again only in the second half of November-December 1920, when the division eliminated the Makhnovist gangs, cleared the southern coast of the peninsula from whites who could not escape abroad or remained at home, trusting in the reassuring assurances of local organs of the Soviet Union.

authorities.

Crimea, alas, turned out to be a very suitable place for the Reds to realize the “holy feeling of class hatred”, very quickly becoming part of the “All-Russian cemetery”. The extreme cruelty of the Civil War threw a bloody veil over the eyes of those who fought on both sides, completely covering their eyes. In Crimea, as nowhere else, even the most elementary norms of warfare that have passed through the centuries — not to fight with prisoners, to treat civilians humanely — were discarded. The cruel reality was that many commissars, educators in their main function, not only did not restrain the animal instincts of part of the command and rank and file of the red units, but, on the contrary, spurred them on.

On November 10, 1920, the Revolutionary Military Council of the Southern Front guaranteed “complete forgiveness” to those who surrendered. Upon learning of this, Lenin expressed extreme bewilderment. After the intervention of the central authorities and the registration of former officers, mass arrests and extrajudicial reprisals against them followed. According to various estimates, from 25,000 to 120,000 people were shot in Crimea. A member of the Revolutionary Military Council of the Southern Front, the chairman of the Crimean Regional Revolutionary Committee, Bela Kun, and the secretary of the regional committee, a member of the Revolutionary Military Council of the 13th Army, Rozalia Zemlyachka (Zalkind), became famous for their particular cruelty. On their orders, about 7,000 arrested officers and officials were shot.’

The terror assumed such proportions that rumors about it immediately spread abroad. The famous historian S.P. Melgunov

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Litvin A.L. Red and white terror in Russia. 1918-1922 Kazan,

1995. S. 82.

wrote in hot pursuit of the events that “the Crimean massacre of 1920-1921. caused even a special revision by the All-Russian Central Executive Committee. The commandants of the cities were interrogated and ... all of them presented a telegram of Bela Kun and his secretary Zemlyachka ... with an order to immediately shoot all registered officers and military officials in defense.

To all appearances, Mekhlis, who was directly subordinate to Zemlyachka, did not see anything out of the ordinary in this. Characteristically, they will later communicate closely in the service in the leading Soviet bodies, be friends with their families. Lev Zakharovich learns about the death of the “bloody commissar” in 1947 in the Karlsbad sanatorium, from where he writes to his wife: “I am saddened ... A bright personality, a direct and truthful person, Bolshevik unshakable and faithful, has left. Big loss!”

The units not engaged in battles, intoxicated with victory and truly plebeian triumph over the vanquished, began to quickly decompose. Deserters, hoarders, bandits multiplied at an unprecedented pace, the troops were engulfed in wholesale drunkenness and robberies. This already threatened the very foundations of the existence of the division as a combat unit. “Above” followed

command to stop. Mehlis did not almond. His behavior is logical: those who looted and honed checkers on the unarmed understood only the language of brute force. The Revolutionary Tribunal was working with might and main. The division commissar instructed to hold open court hearings in the regiments. For preventive purposes, mock trials were carried out with the appearance of "witnesses", "prosecutor", with the pronouncement of a "verdict". Lev Zakharovich was very proud of this invention, believing that it allows "to fill in the gaps in our party, cultural and educational work in parts."

In early December, Mekhlis was elected as a delegate to the party conference of the 4th Army, which now included the 46th Infantry Division. The Army Conference, in turn, delegated him to the 2nd All-Russian Congress of Party Workers of the Red Army and Navy. At the same time, he was elected a delegate to the All-Russian Congress of Soviets. New horizons ahead

politics.

If you try to evaluate the participation of our hero in the Civil War, referring to Soviet historical literature, this is very difficult to do. Literally a few years after the end of the fighting, the true history of the war began to be grossly distorted. The names of Vasily Blucher, August Kork, Fi

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lippa Mironov, Vitaly Primakov, Jerome Uborevich, Ivan Fedko, dozens of other true organizers of the victory in the Crimea. In their place, the propaganda machine substituted largely inflated, but "necessary" figures.

Here is Mehlis. His biography, as we see, was quite combative. But the ideologists of not only L.I. Brezhnev, but also their predecessors. Fiction was abundantly added to the real events in the life of the leaders for greater persuasiveness. Several "tales" from the battle path of Lev Zakharovich have already been cited, not documented, but clearly intended to lay on him the halo of the hero of the Civil War. And if, in the hot pursuit of the events, the liars could have been caught by their participants, then in the 30s, many truth-seekers were already thoroughly sealed up, or even deprived of their lives.

It is symptomatic that, with the approval of Stalin, Mekhlis's merits in the Civil War were especially noted in the canonical edition of the History of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks. Short Course! Only a few political figures were awarded this honor; as historians now well know, their candidacies were selected by the leader himself.

Following the "Short Course", the authors of historical works and propagandists went for direct overexposure, calling Mekhlis in relation to the Civil War among the "most prominent figures of the party and the Soviet state", "outstanding Bolshevik-Leninists". Uborevich and Eideman, Blucher and Kork were sent to the scaffold, and at the same time, students of military academies reverently visited places associated with the commissar youth of Lev Mekhlis. "It turns out that it was not Eideman, not Blucher, not other commanders, but it was he, the "combat commissar of the group of troops of the Kakhovsky bridgehead," who almost single-handedly led the strengthening and defense of the bridgehead from the Whites, which was strongly emphasized in a special guidebook of 1940. it was recommended to inform tourists who make excursions to the places of battles of the civil war. Need I say that while

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History of the CPSU (b). Short course. M., 1937. S. 234.

? Angarsky M.S. The second campaign of the Entente and its defeat. M., 1940. S. 41; Korotkov I.S. Defeat of Wrangel. M., 1955. S. 282; Petrov Yu.P. Military Commissars during the Civil War. M., 1956. S. 91.

3 Karaev GN. Following the Civil War in the USSR. M.-L., 1940. S. 178.

the names of the real leaders of the battles on the bridgehead, who by that time had already disappeared in the abyss of repression, were not even mentioned. This practice of falsification, distorting the real contribution of Mekhlis to the victory of the Red Army, turned, in the end, against him.

Participation in the Civil War was an important stage in his development as a politician. He gained extensive experience in mass political work and quite a solid reputation, showed himself strong-willed, persistent in achieving the goal. The service brought him together with a number of figures who were in major party and military posts or were soon promoted to such posts, he became personally known to Stalin, which played a significant role in his future fate in the great

politics.

It is impossible, however, not to see the internally contradictory nature that the activity of Lev Zakharovich bore. Its political and moral image, readiness to go to any lengths in order to achieve the goal, was formed in the special conditions of a fratricidal war with its heightened class antagonism, massive power powers. From here he adopted a commitment to military, authoritarian forms of work and management of people, a belief in violence as a universal means of achieving major social goals.

In the emergency conditions of the Civil War, as well as the recovery period that followed, such qualities allowed him to be considered not only quite acceptable, but also a promising party worker, opened the way to solid career growth.

Chapter 2

"DETAIL TO THE DISPOSAL OF THE CC"

BYE AT THE FOOT

Mekhlis did not return from Moscow to his native 46th division. On December 22, 1920, in the RVS of the Southern Front, from the head of the political administration of the Revolutionary Military Council of the Republic, I.T. Smilga received a short telegram stating that military commissar 46 had been left at his disposal.

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research institutes. On December 31, Lev Zakharovich was hastily dismissed from the army to the reserve and seconded to the disposal of the Central Committee of the RCP (b). | January 1921, the door opened for him not to a new year, but to a new world: he stepped onto the slippery ladder of the party hierarchy.

What influential forces gave such an acceleration to the career growth of a modest division commissar, of which there are many in the army? Considering that in just ten months he will be working in the People's Commissariat of the Workers' and Peasants' Inspection, headed by Stalin, the assumption that the latter was involved in the fate of Mekhlis seems more than likely. Realizing the strength of the party apparatus earlier than others, the future general secretary of the Central Committee began to form it. Lev Zakharovich, obviously, was given his place in it.

Lev Zakharovich will climb the career ladder with enviable perseverance, working off the advances given to him not out of fear, but out of conscience, in order to justify the hopes of the person who put him on the lower step and carefully followed his further ascent. But one should not disregard the personal - as life has shown, considerable - ambition of Mekhlis himself, his ability to grasp on the fly the laws by which the new Soviet society was formed and lived.

elite.

On January 3, the manager of the affairs of the SNK of the RSFSR N.P. Gorbunov signed an order appointing him to the post of head of the office of the Council of People's Commissars. By the way, they knew each other from the front: Mekhlis was subordinate to Gorbunov, who was the head of the political department of the 14th Army.

Only for the uninitiated, that post could seem insignificant, and the person who occupied it could seem like a kind of Shchedrin clerk, a walking folder. Under the conditions of V.I. Lenin's struggle for primacy in the leadership of the party and the country, this position quickly became less and less clerical and more and more political, because the mail of the chairman of the Council of People's Commissars passed through the hands of Mekhlis. It's like in an irrigation system: the cross section of the channel can be at least large, at least small, but the water flows in it exactly as much as the valve on the distribution unit allows. The office of the Council of People's Commissars was in many respects such a "node", and both the pressure of the incoming "water" - correspondence, and its filtration depended on its chief.

Facts have long become the property of scientists, showing that, as Lenin's illness worsened, Stalin showed an increasing interest in the most confidential information emanating from him and, most importantly, received it from the leader's personal secretaries. It was in this way that the General Secretary of the Central Committee of the RCP(b) learned, for example, that Lenin began to dictate what he was convinced were top secret notes—the future Letter to the Congress! And he learned about it from the secretary M.A. Volodicheva on the very first day of dictation - December 23, 1922. As the well-known St. Petersburg historian V.I. Startsev, did not remain secret from the Secretary General and subsequent dictations, which contained, among other things, impartial criticism of the “wonderful Georgian”.

What, in this case, makes it difficult to assume whether Stalin was looking for approaches to Lenin's environment from the workers of the technical apparatus even before that? The inclusion of Mekhlis in their number, about whom the Secretary General had formed a quite definite idea even at the front, as a person personally devoted to him, was in this sense a strong move of the future Kremlin lord.

Against the background of information reported by V.I. Startsev, does not look in the least plausible the version that was presented in the Parisian émigré press and according to which “the agile and dexterous hands of Mekhlis were involved in concealing the true testament of Lenin directed against Stalin”? There is every reason to believe that L.D. Trotsky, who in one of his books, later published in the West, wrote that the package with the secret "Letter to the Congress" illegally got to Stalin even before the 13th Congress, at which, in accordance with the will of the deceased leader, it was supposed to be announced. The general secretary received this package before the other members of the Politburo and opened it in the presence of Mekhlis and another employee of his secretariat, S.I. Syrtsova\*. Link does not save Trotsky and on some

News of the Central Committee of the CPSU, 1990, No. 1. S. 157.

2 Startsev V.I. Could Stalin have been removed from the post of general secretary in 1923? // Clio, 2007, No. 1 (36). S. 128.

3 Hourly, 1938, No. 217-218. S. 6.

4 See: Tucker R. Stalin. Path to power. 1879-1929. History and personality.

M., 1990. S. 262.

eyewitnesses. If there were any, they simply did not know that the package contained papers known to Stalin for a long time.

At least in hindsight, Trotsky, who was in exile, really wanted to believe that, if not for the manipulation of Lenin's political testament, Stalin would have been removed from power in accordance with this testament. Alas, no matter how comforting myths may be, they crumble under the pressure of irrefutable facts. Namely: not only at the 13th Congress in 1924, but even at the 13th Congress in April 1923 (that is, even during Lenin's lifetime), it was no longer possible to remove Stalin from the post of General Secretary, the position of the latter turned out to be so strong.

And such strength was ensured, among other things, by the skillful placement of its people at all levels of power, among which was Mekhlis. At the same time, as a worker, Lev Zakharovich suited Lenin as well, since he could make the apparatus subordinate to him work more clearly and in an organized manner, which was so sought by the chairman of the Council of People's Commissars. From his papers it is clear how desperate he came from the rapidly proliferating Soviet bureaucracy, how he tried to establish at least a little more efficient state apparatus. "This red tape, especially in Moscow and central institutions, is the most common," the leader wrote in September 1921 to the People's Commissar of Justice D.I. Kursky, demanding that demonstration trials be held over the porters.

What the Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars demanded from the People's Commissar of Justice, he, of course, tried to implement, first of all, in his own apparatus. Within the framework of the office of the UD SNK, Mekhlis was quite suitable for this. His methods in working with people, honed in the Civil War, turned out to be most welcome. First of all, he achieved, through the Central Committee, that the chancellery be staffed with "politically proven" workers. Unnecessarily independent, as well as lazy, sloppy, did not tolerate. Fulfilling Lenin's demand, he ensured that letters addressed to the Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars report to him as soon as possible.

faster. "The employees of the lower reception are charged with the duty," his order read, "secret packages addressed to Vladimir

Ilyich Lenin, hand it over directly (bypassing the general registry) to the duty secretary of the Great Council of People's Commissars or comrade. Fotiyeva (personal secretary of the head of government. - Yu.R.). All at

the secret packets in the name of Vladimir Ilyich Lenin should be entered in a special book No. 1, indicating the month, day and hour of receipt ... The violators kept an answer immediately.

Another problem arose. The Council of People's Commissars and the Council of Labor and Defense produced a lot of documents. Something became outdated, something contradicted the previously accepted, and something duplicated each other - it was almost impossible to sort out all this paper sea. When the chairman of the Council of People's Commissars or one of the people's commissars asked for information on any issue, the search took long hours, or even days. Mekhlis tried with an iron fist to restore elementary order here too, introducing a clear registration of incoming-outgoing, debugging the work of the information desk. The slightest delay was treated as an emergency.

Perhaps, in the clerical field, Lev Zakharovich's talent would have developed with extraordinary force. In the end, K.U. began from the same post in the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR. Chernenko, but in the end became—terrible to say—general secretary of the Central Committee of the CPSU! But a different path awaited the former political commissar: in November 1921, he was again seconded to the disposal of the Central Committee, and there a new appointment followed - to the People's Commissariat of Workers' and Peasants' Inspection. Stalin, People's Commissar of the Rabkrin, formed his team in the department entrusted to him.

Mekhlis participated in the search for the optimal scheme of supra-departmental control that could ensure a successful fight against bureaucracy and red tape in Soviet institutions, real monitoring of the implementation of all decrees and resolutions of central state bodies, preparation of proposals for simplification and improvement public administration systems. These are the tasks that were assigned to the People's Commissariat of the Workers' and Peasants' Inspection by the "Regulations" approved by the Decree of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee of February 7, 1920.

Soviet historians gave a high appraisal of the activities of the People's Commissariat in the first year of its existence, noting a noticeable increase in its authority in comparison with its predecessor, the People's Commissariat of State Control, and the mass nature of the ranks of voluntary assistance.

'RGVA, f. 40884, op. 1, d. 36, l. 107.

nicknames from among the workers and peasants!. However, by the time Mekhlis moved to work in the NKRKI, the situation there had become more complicated. Giving RCTs the status of "department above departments", which is

sought by Stalin, aroused sharp objections even from some leading figures in the party. Such a "monster" as the Soviet system of control, wrote L.B. Krasin, nowhere in the world. "Our main misfortune is," he emphasized, "that we cannot, we do not know how to organize production. This is the weakest point, and not at all in the fact that we do not have a sufficiently well-built control apparatus.

In fact, there were so many shortcomings in the work, and they were overcome by the leadership so slowly that the faction of the RCP (b) under the people's commissariat was forced in the spring of 1921 to apply to the Central Committee with a memorandum, which stated the weakness and inconsistency in the work of the collegium. , lack of coordination in the activities of individual central inspectorates, very weak communication with local authorities, neglect in training the broad masses of workers and peasants in supervisory work, and in general the low prestige of the RCT.

The criticism that sounded from within the people's commissariat merged with sharp assessments of the political leadership of the country. The People's Commissariat of the RKI was sharply criticized by Lenin for being bloated, loose and cumbersome. The Workers' and Peasants' Commissars emphasized in a letter to Stalin dated September 21, 1921, not to catch and expose, but to correct in time, to prevent violations through strict control. In a reply note sent to Lenin on the same day, Stalin, in fact, rejected all the remarks?. In October, he went even further, raising before the Organizing Bureau of the Central Committee of the RCP(b) the question of redistributing communist workers in the people's commissariats, and in such a way as to concentrate the best in his own. Iosif Vissarionovich estimated the need for RCT at 1000-1200 people, in

Ikonnikov S.N. Organization and activities of the RKI in 1920-1925 M., 1960. S. 64; Krasnov A.V. Central Control Commission-RKI in the struggle for socialism (1923-1934). Irkutsk, 1973, p. 83.

2 Quot. by: Soldatenkov V.D. Political and moral consequences of strengthening the power of the CPSU (b). SPb., 1994. S. 15.

3 Lenin V.I. Full coll. op. T. 44. S. 130, 549.

extreme case - 250 people. "The calculation seems exaggerated to me," Lenin stated laconically, making it clear that specialists are not baked like pancakes, and not only Stalin is needed. Nevertheless, the redistribution of communists in the state apparatus was carried out, and it was within its framework that Mekhlis ended up in Rabkrin for the post of deputy head of the general department.

On November 25, the Board of the RCI appointed him Chairman of the Commission for Improving the Structure of the Central and Local Bodies of the People's Commissariat. At the same time, on behalf of the Deputy People's Commissar V.A. Avanesov, he also studied the correctness of using workers and peasants specially delegated from the localities in the apparatus. This problem, as the country moved to the new economic policy, became very acute. The introduction of self-financing absorbed almost all the cadres of workers and peasants who had previously been recruited to work in the RKI: the leaders, not wanting to support controllers at the expense of their enterprises, recalled them to their places. As a result, the number of delegates in 1922 decreased by almost 10 times compared to the previous year. The total number of full-time employees was also reduced to 12 thousand people, that is, three times.

Against this background, the rational use of available forces acquired special significance. Mekhlis, together with a draft report to the Politburo of the Central Committee of the RCP (b), reported his thoughts to the collegium. They consisted in a proposal to abandon continuous surveys and switch to selective surveys during the production of inspections and revisions on an all-Russian scale. When the administrative apparatus or the economic sector is examined from top to bottom, the author of the report reasonably wrote, then almost all the forces in the center and in the local RCTs are diverted, while the rest of the affairs and areas of work are forced to be forgotten.

In the opinion of the Deputy Head of the General Directorate, the following measures would allow saving forces and at the same time improving the quality of inspections, focusing the main attention on purely audit work, in which there was a special need:

the most essential objects for RCT; a clear formulation of the purpose and objectives of the survey; drawing up a work program in advance.

' News of the Workers' and Peasants' Inspection, 1922, No. 11-12. pp. 5-6.

More lively work, directly connected with practical revisions and inspections, began when Lev Zakharovich headed the central administrative inspection of the Workers' and Peasants' Inspectorate, one of the main ones in the people's commissariat. According to the position, she audited the activities of the central institutions: People's Commissariats of Internal Affairs, Justice, Posts and Telegraphs, Nationalities, the State Political Administration, the Central Statistical Office, and was also in charge of the economic activities of the institutions of the RSFSR Council of People's Commissars and the All-Russian Central Executive Committee. In other words, the Mekhlis apparatchik acquired a unique experience: he happened to control not the production sector, but mainly the apparatus, and he had to communicate mainly with the managers of the central departments.

The archival documents that have survived from those days give an idea of the scope and variety of work carried out by the inspection team with the advent of Mekhlis: here are revisions of the military units of the GPU, and verification of compliance with the rules for storing material evidence in judicial institutions, and verification of the transfer of places of detention to conduct of the NKVD, and control of the secret expenditures of the GPU".

Thanks to the work done, Rabkrin was able to "squeeze" some of the high-ranking apparatchiks:

- to save currency in the apparatus of the authorized Central Evacuation Commission. After the intervention of the inspectorate, the transportation to Warsaw of 300,000 rubles (at 1922 prices), allegedly intended for sending Russian prisoners of war from Poland to their homeland, was prohibited, since the Polish side had to bear such expenses by mutual agreement;

- to prevent unproductive expenses in the People's Commissariat of Justice. After the intervention of the administrative inspection, the amount planned for the repair of buildings decreased from more than 5 million rubles to 2.7 million.

- to prevent theft and squandering of funds in several institutions at once. The fact of squandering large sums of money allocated to  
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' GARF, f. 4085, op. 11, d. 382, l. 148v.-149.

starving; an overpayment of more than 270 million rubles was revealed for overtime work performed by the repair and construction bureau under the NKVD; illegal deduction of more than 300 million rubles by MOGES from the office of the authorized representative of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee for the affairs of Hungarian communist emigrants was discovered;

- promptly correct the consequences of negligence in the performance of official duties. The Russian Bureau of Philately of the People's Commissariat of Posts and Telegraphs revealed the fact of non-receipt of postage stamps for 1 trillion rubles in 1921 prices.

We must pay tribute to Lev Zakharovich: 'he was not only a mechanical executor of instructions "from above", but he also thought about how to use the available opportunities for the benefit of the cause. For example, as one of the main conditions for the successful work of the Rabkrin, he considered the independence of the department, strongly objecting to the established practice when RCT inspectors participated in audit commissions appointed by controlled bodies for departmental verification. In his opinion, this depersonalized the role of representatives of the RCT, reduced the scale of their work, and made it difficult to apply judicial measures to the guilty in the event that departmental checks ended in administrative penalties, as if consecrated by the mere participation of the inspectors of the Rabkrin.



The first active appearances of Mekhlis in the press date back to the time of his work in the People's Commissariat of the RCT. Many of his proposals, voiced from the pages of the departmental publication *Izvestia of the Workers' and Peasants' Inspection*, are very sound and rational. Thus, he proposed to supplement the refusal of the participation of representatives of the RCT in departmental inspections by the abolition of the permanent representations of the people's commissariat in subordinate institutions. He called such representation a relic, which distracts significant personnel from the direct conduct of audits and creates the possibility of excessive rapprochement with the audited persons on a mercenary basis. Reasonable are also his arguments in favor of the proposal to publish in newspapers the names of those persons who were relieved of their posts based on the materials of inspections, so that negligent workers could not get "warm" jobs in other state institutions. Made ten years later, such a proposal would hardly have met with understanding, since it undermined the existing by the 1930s

nomenclature system for the selection and placement of personnel. But in the 1920s, such free-thinking was encouraged, although it was not often embodied in life.

At the same time, in the work of the inspectorate headed by Mekhlis, a shortcoming was increasingly manifested, which was generally characteristic of the activities of the Rabkrin, namely, a passion for purely control and audit functions and neglect of work that would contribute to the improvement of the state apparatus. This position was reflected in the theses approved by the Collegium of the NK RKI in August 1922, where it was stated that the transition to the New Economic Policy gave the slogans of accounting and control a particularly important significance. However, while assigning the leading role to inspection work, the leaders of the people's commissariat completely lost sight of the issues of improving the management system, reducing and reducing the cost of the state apparatus!

In a letter to members of the Board of the People's Commissariat of the RKI dated August 21, 1922, Lenin wrote on this occasion: "The type of work is individual surveys and reports. Old man. But there is no alteration of the apparatus and its improvement" (italics by V.I. Lenin. - Yu.R.).

In fairness, it should be noted that Mekhlis saw this problem, albeit on a local scale, without tangible consequences for the apparatus of at least one of the central departments. Nevertheless, thanks to the efforts of the administrative inspection, the question was raised of creating a central registration bureau under the NKVD to replace the three bodies that performed the same functions of registering criminals - the statistical department of the NKJ, the department of moral statistics of the Central Statistical Bureau and the accounting and statistical part Wertrib (Supreme Tribunal). Cash desks were also abolished at the auto depot and equestrian base of the Council of People's Commissars, at the sanitary department of the Kremlin, the construction bureau in the economic department of the NKVD was closed as unnecessary, and so on.

It was in the RKI that Mekhlis felt like a real apparatchik. Answering the question of the questionnaire, what kind of work on the line of the Rabkrin he

'  
The Role and Tasks of the RCT in Connection with the New Economic Policy (Abstracts adopted by the board of the NC RCT at a meeting on September 2, 1921). M., 1921.

? Lenin V.I. Full coll. op. T.54. S. 274.

considers the most suitable for himself, wrote: "On the establishment of the apparatus." And he indicated the reason: "I have experience."

Work in the RKI made frequent and regular communication between Mekhlis and Stalin. They had something to remember in common in the Civil War, but, having once and for all chosen a line of conduct in relation to their leader, a former member of the Revolutionary Military Council of the Southwestern Front, now a People's Commissar, and very soon General Secretary of the Central Committee, Lev Zakharovich never crossed the invisible hell. Always collected, business-like, ready to respond to Stalin's peculiar humor, but - God forbid - stray into front-line familiarity.

A GOOD COMMUNIAR GROWS UP

When on October 10, 1922, a son was born to Lev Zakharovich, the happy father decided, in his words, "to enable the future person to study his childhood, to know the conditions in which he lived and was brought up." And so he took a thick notebook in a cardboard cover so that there was no wear and tear and began to write down all sorts of nonsense about his child, dear to the heart of any parent.

On the cover of the diary, the young father wrote the words: "The new man." It must be understood that he meant his son, "a young Communard, a useful member of the family of our future socialist society." But, of course, such a "new man" — a member of a cohort of innovators, revolutionaries, called upon to build the society of the future according to only known schemes — he considered himself first of all.

And today, after more than eighty years, these notes are interesting in their own way, unfortunately, irregular and cut off in 1930. For in them it is not so much the son Leonid, "Lenichka", as his father, a functionary quickly rising through the ranks. The way of thinking of Lev Zakharovich, distinguished by extreme orthodoxy, his dreams and plans, his way of life.

But before that, a few words about Mekhlis's wife, Elizaveta Abramovna Mlynarchik. They met back in Civil. A family tradition has been preserved: during the rebellion of the Grigorievites in Yekaterinoslav, Mekhlis was seriously shell-shocked (this, however, has not been documented). The young doctor Mlynarchik picked him up and provided medical assistance. By morning, when it got better,

the messiah from the first-aid post ran away, but he did not forget the military doctor. In 1919 they got married. Looking ahead, let us say: Elizaveta Abramovna, who outlived her husband by two decades, until the end of her days devotedly took care of perpetuating his memory. Through her efforts, the Main Political Directorate of the Soviet Army and Navy, the Institute of Marxism-Leninism under the Central Committee of the CPSU, many archives, museums were raised to their feet - documents related to the activities of Mekhlis were being identified everywhere, his personal funds were created.. .

But back to The New Man. When his wife was taken to the hospital, Lev Zakharovich was in the service. I returned to a communal apartment densely populated with tenants - and then such news! "Not a penny," writes the young father. — I took an advance payment of 300 million from the NK RKI. The future man will be amazed at the magnitude of this figure, not knowing its actual value in a revolutionary period. I bought what I need."

And now "a new person in his apartment in the circle of his beloved parents." The confession of a young father is understandable: "I love my son - I say these two words for the first time in my life." And here (an entry dated January 2, 1923): "On the screen is a portrait of Ilyich "with new strength - he is on duty" and a red bow. The kid often looks at the portrait, not realizing that this is the leader of the proletariat. It must be assumed that when the baby grows up, only then will humanity realize this great name.

Over time, "politics" in these records more and more crowded out "everyday life". In connection with the funeral of diplomat V.V. Vorovsky, who was shot dead in Lausanne by a Russian émigré, on May 23, 1923, Mekhlis makes the following entry: "I would be happy if I knew that Lusik ... would be a faithful proletarian, would be an honest follower of the dead and fighting Communards."

Most likely, such grandiloquence reflected not only and not so much the ideology of Mekhlis, but the assimilation by him - and by this time he was already working in the Central Committee of the RCP (b) - the rules of the game adopted by the party elite. These rules boiled down to a simple but rigid scheme: whether you share communist ideology and morality or not, you must always and everywhere publicly swear allegiance to it. Practice trust if you are among the chosen ones.

RGVA, f. 40884, op. 1, d. 7, l. 17.

Here is a trifle, a detail: they fed their baby Mehliis with milk, fruit juices - and this was in the hungry winter of 1923, which was fatal for tens of thousands of people! Moreover, in the diary it is written about this somehow in passing, as if it were taken for granted. How many could boast of such opportunities in ruin, and after all, Lev Zakharovich was then an apparatchik by no means of the highest level.

In the summer, Mekhlis sent his wife and child to a special dacha in Serebryany Bor, the most picturesque place near Moscow, where the old nobility was immediately replaced by a new, Soviet one after the revolution. And from there, the whole family went to Maryino, Kursk province, to the rest home of the Central Committee named after Lenin. "Here in Maryino," wrote Mekhlis, "the atmosphere is exclusively aristocratic, which he himself has not seen and, of course, in which he has never lived. Yes, the bourgeoisie knew how to get along ... Ride the little boy in a boat. Let it gain strength, develop, prepare for the struggle of life.

A month and a half was gaining strength and health necessary for the "fight", and the father. It turned out that the lordly atmosphere serves this much better than the sanctimonious Puritan morality demonstrated in public. In order not to return to this issue, let's say: it is not noticeable that the "ideological communist" Mekhlis was disturbed by thoughts about, in today's language, undeserved privileges and benefits. He fell in love with the velvet season in the Crimea. Having got the taste, sometimes he even allowed himself to be persuaded to break away from business at last, to relax.

A note by Stalin A.I. has been preserved. Rykov, then head of the Council of People's Commissars, and Secretary of the Central Committee V.M. Molotov dated July 17, 1925: "I ask you both to arrange Mekhlis in Mukhalatka or another comfortable sanatorium, do not pay attention to the protests of Mekhlis, he does not listen to me, he must listen to you, I am waiting for an answer!"

Even during the work of Lev Zakharovich in the People's Commissariat of Rabkrin, the family first moved from a communal apartment to the "house on the embankment", famous by the writer Yuri Trifonov, to neighbors with many members of the government (Muscovites know the house from the Udarnik cinema and Variety Theater located there), and later to the so-called 1st House of Soviets at the corner of Tverskaya and Mokhovaya, where senior officials of the Party Central Committee lived. Later there were even more prestige-

'RGVA, f. 40884, op. 1, d. 8, l. 1.

ny house on Granovsky street and a personal dacha. The commandant's office of the GPU guarded the tenants from the "people". Closed distributors, polyclinics, dachas were at their service. As a functionary who reached certain heights, Mekhlis received permission from the capital's GPU to carry firearms. |

If Lev Zakharovich did not see anything exceptional in all this, being on the lower steps of the nomenclature pyramid, then all the more he considered this the norm, having risen "upstairs". There is, for example, a case when, during the war, he tried to summon a dentist from the Kremlin clinic to his Bryansk Front on a special ambulance plane specially for this occasion. And legends spread about this man, as if he did not know sleep or rest at work, did not go on vacation for years, was modest to the point of painful scrupulousness!

Yes, unlike many high-ranking figures, Mekhlis was not a corrupt official. But what was "supposed" in connection with the official posts he held, he used without embarrassment. For his very "undemandingness" in everyday life was of a special kind, between it and the standard of living of ordinary fellow citizens lay a huge distance. Objective researchers have established that the system of privileges that accompanied the life of the Soviet elite arose already in the first post-revolutionary months and then steadily improved. References to the party maximum as a limiter to the growth of the material well-being of leaders do not work on closer examination. For example, in 1925 the rate of a party worker was at least 3.5 times higher than the average wage of an industrial worker, not to mention the significantly greater purchasing power of the ruble for the former. And the numerous and not advertised privileges of the top (a curious echo between the Djilas "new class" and the Mekhlis "new man") in the supply of food and manufactured goods, in the provision of housing, vouchers to sanatoriums and rest homes, including abroad, transport and medical services, in establishing personal pensions...

The grandiose system of bribery with benefits and privileges served one purpose - to tame, solder with common material interests those who are included in this chosen circle, to make them indebted to the one who outlines this circle. How can one not remember Trotsky, already

in the early 1930s, he tried, however, already from abroad, to draw public attention to the "dacha-harem character" of the Stalinist bureaucracy!

## IN STALIN'S SECRETARIAT

The end of the Civil War, the introduction of the NEP caused significant changes in the political life of the country. The formation of a multistructural structure in the economy was not accompanied by the expansion of democracy. More and more political power was concentrated in the hands of the Bolshevik Party. The one-party system, the absence of a constructive counterbalance to the emerging autocracy inevitably led to the bureaucracy of the apparatus, selection to it not for professional, but for ideological reasons, to the self-praise of the communists. The time was not far off when the people were compelled to say thank you to the Party for all that they had achieved through their own exhausting labor.

Power in the country began to be concentrated not even in the hands of party organizations, but in their committees, the liberated apparatus. Stalin grasped the role of the latter especially well and much earlier than his rivals in the Politburo. Through the Secretariat and the Organizing Bureau of the Central Committee, the organizational distribution department of the Central Committee, he selected and placed his cadres in the center and in the localities, who after some time would be able (and in the end turned out to be able) to provide the General Secretary with a majority at party congresses, which is - elk is the main condition for legitimization of power won by unrighteous means.

A unique role in the rise of Stalin belonged to the Political Bureau of the Central Committee, which, according to some researchers, as early as 1923-1924 "turned into a hypertrophied supergovernment, simultaneously performing the functions of the country's supreme legislator... Thus, the "party policy" was determined not by the party and not by its Central Committee, but by a narrow apex group... Most important questions passed through Stalin's personal office.

It was here, in the "personal office", or rather, Stalin's secretariat, that Mekhlis came, becoming one of the assistants in November 1922.

' Rogovin V.Z. The party of the executed. M., 1997. S. 191-192.

nicknames of the General Secretary of the Central Committee. The general public has some idea about the specifics of his position - assistant, and then first assistant and head of the bureau of the Secretariat of the Central Committee (later - the secret department of the Central Committee) from the memoirs of politicians, top echelon managers, military leaders in that part of them that concerns the notorious A. N. Poskrebyshv.

But what specific role did Stalin assign precisely to Lev Zakharovich, taking him into his inner circle? Mekhlis himself preferred not to talk about this, and the archives are very stingy with such materials. And the point here is not only in the extreme secrecy of documents emanating from the core of the party apparatus - the Secretariat of the General Secretary. It should also be borne in mind that the activity of Mekhlis during this period was not of a public nature, the very position of assistant, secretary presupposes predominantly personal, oral, not recorded on paper relations with the boss and his entourage.

As the American biographer of the Soviet leader R. Tucker wrote, "as General Secretary, Stalin in the 1920s formed a corps of personal assistants, selected by virtue of talent, ingenuity and devotion. They kept Stalin informed of all developments in any sphere, including international affairs, and helped him develop a political line. They were also the link between him and the bureaucratic apparatus... Stalin's personal assistants, among whom Tovstukha and Mekhlis stood out in the 1920s, were given the title of "Assistant Secretary of the Central Committee".

Boris Bazhanov, Stalin's former secretary, who fled abroad in 1927 and left an evil, but interesting and mostly reliable book of memoirs, spoke in more or less detail about this period in the life of the Central Committee, the General Secretary and his apparatus. Calling himself an assistant in the Politburo, he calls Mekhlis the personal assistant to the general secretary. That one gets

all correspondence that comes personally to the boss, and he himself reports it. Only he and Bazhanov have the right to enter Stalin without a report, which is not allowed even by G.O. Kanner and I.P. Tovstukha to two other assistants. Everyone else can enter the Secretary General's office only after the report of Mekhlis.

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Tucker R. Stalin. Path to power. S. 271.

... By the time the CPSU disappeared from the political arena in August 1991, its exorbitantly overgrown apparatus of the Central Committee occupied a whole complex of buildings in the area of Staraya Ploshchad. In a gloomy gray building that overlooks the square in the middle of the square, the top management was located on the fifth floor. This tradition came from the first general secretary.

"After going up to the 5th floor," we read from Bazhanov, "you can go along the corridor to the right—here is Stalin, his assistants, and the secretariat of the Politburo... The first door leads to the offices of Kanner and Mekhlis. Only through it you can get to Stalin's office, and even then not directly, but by passing through the room where the courier is on duty ... "

In addition to the mail report and streamlining the reception of visitors, Lev Zakharovich, together with the rest of Stalin's assistants and other secretaries of the Central Committee, prepared various background information, took part in the preliminary consideration of issues that were submitted to the Politburo, the Orgburo and the Secretariat of the Central Committee, conducted the necessary correspondence, followed stenographing meetings of the leading bodies of the party, carried out numerous personal assignments of the General Secretary, and, according to Bazhanov, sometimes "dark" and "dark".

Among other things, the Stalinist secretariat also had the duty to form a positive image of Stalin. A procedure was established in accordance with which Tovstukha, Kanner, Mekhlis, and later Poskrebyshev daily looked through and endorsed all materials about him and photographs for printing, making a considerable contribution to inflating the cult of the General Secretary of the Central Committee, to affirming in the minds of the masses myths like "Stalin is Lenin today", "beloved leader", "father of peoples".

It is quite possible that Lev Zakharovich himself was not immediately able to appreciate the dizziness of the height to which he soared so rapidly. The new position, due to proximity to the first person of the party, gave him more opportunities than any other member of the government. A seemingly technical person whose main task - at least a public one - is to regulate the flow of papers and visitors, Mekhlis has acquired an invisible, but quite  
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! Bazhanov B. Memoirs of the former secretary of Stalin. M.. 1990. S. 54.

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borrowed power over a huge layer of party and state officials, excluding for the time being perhaps the highest elite.

Of course, at the same time I had to carry out small, sometimes humiliating assignments. The leader liked to have fun, putting his "subjects" in an awkward position, like repeatedly putting a tomato on a chair for the blind Mikhail Ivanovich Kalinin. The same thing happened with our hero. The artist Boris Yefimov recalled that Mekhlis himself told his brother, the well-known journalist Mikhail Koltsov, about his service with Stalin. When the leader had nothing to light his pipe with, he would call for an assistant. He entered. Stalin demanded: "Comrade Mekhlis, matches!" After repeated repetitions of the same scene, Mekhlis installed a special bell with the inscription "matches" on Stalin's table, and when this bell rang, he sent the matches by courier. But Stalin did not deny himself the pleasure of mocking. He rang the main bell and, when the assistant appeared at the door, "guilty" threw up his hands and said with a grin:

— Comrade Mekhlis, matches!

It is curious that the object of Stalin's jokes spoke about this without any offense and even laughing complacently.

His influence increased even more when, in November 1924, he became Stalin's first assistant and at the same time head of the Bureau of the Secretariat of the Central Committee, which acted as a department of the Central Committee.

The circle of affairs and duties of the Mekhlis has noticeably expanded. A certain idea of their nature is given by excerpts from the personal correspondence of his predecessor in this position, A.M. Nazaretyan, referring to the second half of 1922: "On the one hand, I am going through a big school here and I am aware of the whole world and Russian life, I am going through a school of discipline, accuracy in work is being developed, from this point of view I am satisfied, on the other hand, this work is purely clerical, painstaking, subjectively unsatisfactory, menial work, absorbing such a lot of time that it is impossible to sneeze and breathe, especially under the firm hand of Koba. "Koba trains me well. I go through a big but boring school. While from me he develops the most perfect clerk

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and controller over the execution of the decisions of the Political Bureau, the Organizational Bureau and the Secretariat".

Apparently, Mekhlis managed not to succumb to the shaft of turnover and introduced a lot of new things into the work of the structure headed by him, which contributed by hardware to the concentration of all real power in the hands of the Politburo and Stalin personally.

The activities of the Bureau of the Secretariat of the Central Committee, as well as its head, Mekhlis, are one of the "blank" spots in literature. The lack of information on this subject is explained by the atmosphere of extreme secrecy, confidentiality, and very soon absolute secrecy in which the highest bodies of the RCP(b)—VCP(b) carried out their activities. As early as November 8, 1919, the Politburo considered Stalin's statement about the leakage of information about the meetings of the Central Committee and decided to introduce such a procedure in which acquaintance with the documents of the leading bodies of the party was possible only for "the minimum number of comrades." Decisions on the most serious issues were not recorded in the minutes.

With the victory in the Civil War and the strengthening of the Bolshevik power, it would seem that there was no longer any need for such closeness, previously justified by the wartime situation. However, a different pattern was observed: the higher the real power role of the party body, the more its work was entangled in a veil of secrecy, and not only for the population and party masses. Various information was more and more strictly dosed and at different levels of power, depending on the real position of this or that person in its system.

As the head of the Bureau of the Secretariat of the Central Committee, which was engaged in the maintenance of the governing bodies of the Central Committee, Mekhlis was directly involved in the approval of such a regime of secrecy. The former Central Party Archive of the Central Committee of the CPSU stores many resolutions, circulars and instructions on this issue, the drafts of which belong to him. For example, the resolution "On the procedure for relations between departments of the Central Committee of the RCP with Soviet, professional, cooperative, etc. organizations

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Cit. Quoted from: Bolshevik Leadership. Correspondence. 1912-1927. Sat. documents. M., 1996. S. 256-257, 262. 2 Izvestia of the Central Committee of the CPSU, 1990, No. 5. S. 159.

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zations", approved at a meeting of the Secretariat of the Central Committee on July 17, 1925, allowed to correspond with third-party state and public bodies only to the heads of departments of the Central Committee and their deputies; at the same time, it should have dealt exclusively with issues departments within their jurisdiction.

On May 29, 1925, the Secretariat of the Central Committee of the RCP(b) approved the drafts of several more resolutions prepared by the head of its bureau on the procedure for issuing certificates of decisions of the highest bodies of the party. The circle of persons who had the right to personally request information on decisions was sharply limited: the Organizing Bureau and the Secretariat - not lower than the deputy head of the Central Committee department, other persons (at the level of People's Commissar, assistant head of the Central Committee department) - only on questions of the relevant department or department; Plenum of the Central Committee and the Politburo - only members and candidate members of the Central Committee and the Presidium of the Central Control Commission, the first assistant secretaries of the Central Committee and the head of the Bureau of the Presidium of the Central Control Commission. At the same time, all certificates were recorded in a special book, their issuance required the permission of the head of the bureau of the Secretariat of the Central Committee, that is, Mekhlis himself, in extreme cases, his deputy or the first assistant secretaries of the Central Committee.

In the purposeful approval of the secrecy regime, the documents prepared by Mekhlis, which determined the procedure for registering, receiving and sending secret correspondence, the rules for using the seals of the Central Committee, the procedure for sealing and protecting the premises of the Secretariat Bureau on the 5th floor of the Central Committee building on Old Square, where Stalin's office, the Politburo rooms, the cipher bureau, the secret archive and a number of others were located. They are developed thoroughly, up to clear instructions on how to flash the package and what kind of seal to put, how many control cards to start and what marks to make on them when the document moves. Undoubtedly, the general parameters of the regime of secrecy in the formulation of party information were not set by the head of the bureau of the Secretariat of the Central Committee. But there is no doubt that in the person of Mekhlis, the leaders of the party found a talented, even inspired performer who fully shared the idea of the need to create party policy in the utmost secrecy.

'RGASPI, f. 17, op. 86, d. 75, l. 129, 130.

With his direct participation, the procedure for considering issues at meetings of the Politburo of the Central Committee, which survived for decades, was established. The head of the bureau shared the concerns of the secretaries of the Central Committee about a large percentage of "noodles" from minor, secondary issues, so the following procedure was established. During the week, each of the assistant secretaries of the Central Committee accumulated materials received from the people's commissariats and other departments for possible consideration by the Politburo. On Mondays, Lev Zakharovich gathered the assistants to the general secretary, the secretary of the Politburo, his assistant, the duty secretary in charge of monitoring the implementation of previously adopted decisions, to consider the preliminary agenda of the Politburo meeting. He heard brief reports on the results of the work carried out with the materials received, and decided which issues remained on the agenda and which should be excluded. The document developed during the meeting was presented to the secretaries of the Central Committee, and then to Stalin, who made the final decision.

Such facts very expressively testify to the purely administrative, but therefore no less significant, possibilities of the Mekhlis to influence the solution of the most important issues for the party and the country. He was not burdened with great responsibility (for example, he had the last word in deciding which of the nomenklatura workers could be informed on a particular decision of the Organizing Bureau or the Secretariat; in certain cases, he was the only one who, except for the secretaries of the Central Committee, could give permission to remove the seals from the secret premises of the Central Committee, etc.). By some indications, it is clear that he was not averse to expanding the scope of his duties as a party functionary, and, if possible, to enter the circle of public politicians. So, in one of the documents sent to the leadership and defining the circle of persons who should be given the right to be present at all meetings of the Politburo and plenums of the Central Committee, he named himself among others, although he was deleted from the list as one of the secretaries of the Central Committee.

This period in the life of the party, including its apparatus, was marked by a sharp factional struggle for power, largely invisible, but no less tense and cruel. In order not to get lost in its atmosphere, it was necessary to decide: who are you for? The facts show that he did not hesitate to take the side of the Sta-

line. First of all, this refers to the confrontation between the Secretary General and Trotsky. By virtue of his position, Mekhlis was not only aware of Stalin's behind-the-scenes meetings with Kamenev and Zinoviev, allies in the anti-Trotskyist "triumvirate", but also provided them with organizational support. Like the other assistants to the leader, he fully shared his leader's hatred for Trotsky and adjusted the entire apparatus of the Secretariat Bureau accordingly.

According to Bazhanov's observations, his colleague resorted to the "convenient mask of an 'ideological communist'." I don't really believe in her, I see that he is an opportunist who will adapt to everything. And so it will happen. In the future, no Stalinist crimes will embarrass him. He will serve Stalin unfailingly until the end of his days, but at the same time he will pretend that he believes in Stalin's superiority. A similar assessment was expressed by the biographer of the leader D.A. Volkogonov: "Not devoid of abilities, but with frankly police thinking, he was hardly a man

ideas."

Probably, at that moment Mekhlis was not a conscious opportunist in the true sense of the word. Trust in the words and deeds of the leader was tantamount to his adherence to Marxist theory. He hardly fully realized that the model of barracks socialism, which he became an adherent of following Stalin, had little in common with Marxism. And if he was aware, he acted according to the principle - for the theory it is even worse. It turned out to be much more important for our hero to remain faithful to a certain person than to a certain theory.

Stalin built a new society according to his own schemes, using the most diverse, including anti-democratic, and often simply criminal from the point of view of morality and law, methods of dealing with political opponents. Mekhlis was a match for him. Brought up in the atmosphere of the Civil War, he, like many in the party, was politically and morally ready for authoritarian forms of relations with opponents, recognizing honesty and democracy only in relation to like-minded people. But later he also abandoned these moral restrictions, essentially guided by the cynical principle: to achieve the goal in the fight against ideological opponents, all means are good.

Lev Zakharovich, for example, knew that Stalin was listening in on the telephone conversations of other members of the Politburo. He knew, but believed that this was not only quite acceptable in relations between "comrades

according to the party", but more than that, it is useful, because it serves to reveal the secret plans of the oppositionists.

Stalin, for his part, taught his assistant more subtle and prudent methods of reprisal against the opposition. There is a known case when, after the 15th Congress of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks, Mekhlis expressed indignation at the fact that the sharp attacks of ideological opponents did not meet with a rebuff on his part and proposed to ban such discrediting of the top leader. To this, his interlocutor only grinned through his mustache and made it clear that the time for prohibitions had not yet come: "Let them talk! It is not the enemy that is dangerous that reveals itself. Dangerous is the hidden enemy, which we do not know. And these, which have all been identified, all rewritten - the time for accounts will come with them.

It is good to know the enemy, and to keep one's plans and deeds secret even from the closest friends, Stalin also taught this to his assistant. Following the instructions of the General Secretary, in the second half of 1925, Lev Zakharovich began to actively work on the idea of creating a secret department of the Central Committee instead of the Bureau of the Secretariat.

He is the author of the structural diagram of the department, which was supposed to include the following sub-departments: control (function - consolidated control over the implementation of decisions of the plenums of the Central Committee, the Politburo, the Orgburo and the Secretariat), reference and codification (systematization of decisions of the highest bodies of the party for all the years of its existence, preparation of reference materials on these decisions), accounting and return of documents (accounting for the distribution of secret documents of the Central Committee for execution and information to the places, as well as a certain circle of party state leaders and control over their timely return), encryption (distribution of documents in cipher), general (auxiliary operations: reprinting documents, in



including especially secret ones, their registration, forwarding, shorthand recording of meetings of the highest bodies of the party leadership). In addition, it was planned to include in the department the secret archive of the Central Committee, as well as two technical secretariats - the plenums of the Central Committee and the Politburo, the Orgburo and the Secretariat of the Central Committee. In addition to the head and his deputies, the assistants to the secretaries of the Central Committee were to be included in the leading link of the department.

'RGASPI, f. 17, op. 86, d. 75, l. 203-205.

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Such a department was created by a resolution of the Organizing Bureau of the Central Committee of March 19, 1926, after Mekhlis left his post. Nevertheless, the basic structure and functions of the department remained for a long time as he presented them in his project. As a result, the tendency to increase the level of secrecy in the work of the party apparatus not only did not decrease, but grew.

When Mekhlis was the head of the Bureau of the Secretariat of the Central Committee, the issue of the party archive was resolved in favor of Stalin and his group. The heightened attention to it was explained not only and not so much by the needs of the current work, but - this should be said especially - by the intensification of the struggle for power in the leadership of the RCP (b), in which archival materials turned out to be a serious weapon in the hands of those who owned.

During the first half of 1925, the Orgburo and the Secretariat returned to the question of the Party archive several times. The procedure for using and storing documents was sharply tightened. "The Central Committee explains," the party press informed, "that the original documents emanating from or addressed to the Central Committee and individual members of the Central Committee are the property of the Party and should be concentrated in the archives of the Central Committee." Accordingly, all those who had such documents were asked to immediately return them in originals, copies were allowed only as a last resort.

In June, according to a joint report by Mekhlis and S.I. Kanatchikov, director of the Archives of the October Revolution, the Orgburo decided to have two archives under the Central Committee of the RCP(b): a common one - Istpart (Commission for collecting and studying materials on the history of the October Revolution and the history of the Russian Communist Party), where to transfer all unclassified documents, and a secret bureau of the Secretariat of the Central Committee, formed from secret documents. They should have concentrated documents and materials covering the entire existence of the party and previously stored in the Archives of the October Revolution, the Kremlin archives and Eastpart, placing the funds on the territory of the Kremlin. The departments of the Central Committee were allowed to have in the current office work documents no more than three years old, all the rest were ordered to be transferred to the archive of KhIV.

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News of the Central Committee of the RCP (b), 1925, No. 8. S. 5.

Thus, in the second half of 1925, it was Mekhlis who became the main keeper of party secrets. The significance of the secret archive under its jurisdiction increased even more in December of the same year, when, by decision of the Orgburo, the original transcripts of the meetings of the Central Committee and its commissions, party congresses and conferences were transferred there without fail.

From now on, free access to such documents was closed even to major apparatchiks of the Central Committee of the RCP(b). When Kanatchikov requested a number of materials from the 1st, 10th, 19th and 13th Party Congresses that the Istpart needed for publishing the protocols, Lev Zakharovich brought the matter to the Secretariat of the Central Committee. In an explanatory note, he wrote: "I personally (underlined by Mekhlis. - O.R.) do not consider myself entitled to give out these materials, since they are classified as top secret." In the decision taken, Kanatchikov undertook to submit an exact list of the requested documents and a list of persons who would personally use them, after which it was supposed to reconsider the issue at the Secretariat of the Central Committee.

The years spent in the Stalinist secretariat, no doubt, formed an experienced worker from Mekhlis, who mastered the purely bureaucratic methods of work. At the same time, it is impossible not to pay attention to the fact that he noticeably falls out of the common image of a party apparatchik - unhurried, imposing, obsequious to his superiors. In work he was very energetic, mobile, worked hard and selflessly. He demanded the same from his subordinates, not being afraid to defend his opinion before the leadership.

With reference to Alexander Fadeev, the writer F.I. Chuev cites the fact that Mekhlis challenged the decision of Stalin, who reinstated a technical worker, who was fired by the head of the bureau of the Secretariat of the Central Committee for violating labor discipline. At the same time, the Secretary General allegedly even spoke about Mekhlis: "I can't do anything with him." The latter was the leader's game for the public, but the fact itself seems very real: Lev Zakharovich has always been stubborn.

On January 22, 1926, the Secretariat of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks decided to release Mekhlis from the duties of the head of the bureau of the Secretariat of the Central Committee and assistant secretary of the Central Committee in view of enrolling in Marxism courses at the Communist Academy. How can this turn of events be explained? Bazhanov reduces everything to the intrigues of Tovstukha, who sought

get rid of a dangerous competitor. Despite the fact that Tovstukha was indeed appointed to the position of head of the Bureau of the Secretariat, such an explanation seems unconvincing, especially since Bazhanov himself was not a witness to the incident, since by that time he had already fled abroad. Even admitting the possibility of some kind of apparatus intrigue, the author believes that Mekhlis's departure from the Stalinist secretariat was not the result of a deterioration in his relations with the Secretary General. The situation was rather the opposite: having included his assistant in the nearest personnel reserve, the leader deliberately sent him to study in order to then have support in him at the required level of the power pyramid.

The validity of such an assumption is best evidenced by the further career of Lev Zakharovich: of all the assistants to the leader, only he and Poskrebyshv occupied really high posts over time.

## RED PROFESSOR

Blessing Mekhlis to study first at the courses of Marxism, and then at the ICP, Stalin probably instructed his, now former assistant, not only to arm himself theoretically, but at the same time and reliably keep an eye on red professors and those who were preparing to become such. It is no secret that the party's theoretical institutions have long been reserved opposition to the leader.

"Before the revolution, he graduated from a six-year Jewish school and, moreover, was engaged in self-education," Lev Zakharovich reported what "universities" he had gone through before in his autobiography, written on September 15, 1927, when he entered the IKP. — Under the Soviet regime, he studied part-time at the economic department of the FON (Faculty of Social Sciences of Moscow State University. — Yu.R.), moved conditionally to the 3rd year, but due to the conditions of work in the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of the Soviet Union, he was forced to quit his studies. He graduated from the courses of Marxism at the Communist Academy.

Studying at party universities was an important step in the formation of an orthodox Stalinist from Mekhlis. Here he received a rich practice of polemics with the ideological opponents of the leader, and since he had much less creativity than they did, he intuitively cultivated the "strong" sides of his thinking.

and behavior - a tendency to dogmatism and crackling demagoguery, the ability, in case of difficulties with arguments, to bring down political accusations on the opponent.

Such a detail is not without interest - together with Mekhlis, the sinister Nikolai Yezhov gnawed at the granite of science. As they say, P.N. Pospelov, a future academician, editor of Pravda and Secretary of the Central Committee, and then Deputy Head of the Propaganda and Agitation Department of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks, wrote in 1937: "The Party sent these two, already then outstanding workers of our Party

to study, knowing what enormous benefit they can bring to the party and the Soviet people, having mastered the heights of revolutionary theory.

The IKP was conceived as a forge of highly qualified Marxist cadres of social scientists for higher education. For the most part, the old professors boycotted the Soviet power, while those who went to her service were not very trusted. Therefore, an educational institution was created in which students received factual knowledge from old professors, and Marxist theory was to be learned from the leaders of the party. Upon completion of their studies, they were supposed to gradually replace the specialists inherited from the previous regime in the role of teachers of social science disciplines in universities. The work of the communist education of the youth thus passed from the class-alien, albeit loyal, professorship into the reliable hands of "their own".

In reality, however, the ICP trained not so much teachers and scientists—there were only twenty-five percent of them—as party, Soviet, and economic workers. The selection of students was carried out strictly. The decision on admission was made at a very high level - in the Orgburo of the Central Committee, after which the ikapist was entered into the nomenclature and, upon graduation, could count on a solid appointment. It is no coincidence that the Institute of Red Professors was unofficially called the theoretical headquarters and personnel forge of the Central Committee. Indeed, quite a few loyal Stalinist minions were "forged" here. So, at the same time as Mekhlis, not only Yezhov studied at the ICP, but also the future secretaries of the Central Committee of the KISS L.F. Ilyichev, P.N. Pospelov, M.A. Suslov, First Secretary of the Moscow City Party Committee, Head of the Main Political Directorate of the Red Army A.S. Shcherbakov, heads of the propaganda and agitation department of the Central Committee G.F. Aleksandrov and F.V. Konstantinov, trendsetters in social science -

academician philosophers M.B. Mitin and P.F. Yudin, historian A.M. Pankratov.

But many of Stalin's opponents also worked and came out of these same walls. In a fierce struggle with them, the legion of Stalinists of the new formation grew, and Lev Mekhlis was not at all lost among them. The three years he spent in the ICP, from 1927 to 1930, became for him a real school of struggle against dissent. His fury in this struggle was so great that after a good quarter of a century one of his fellow students A.A. Zalkind recalled him as if it were yesterday: "None of us will ever forget how much Lev Zakharovich did to expose the cleverly disguised agents of the leaders of the anti-party groups sent to the ICP. No wonder these enemy agents bitterly hated Mekhlis, who was loved and respected by the entire team, for whom he was a model of Bolshevik intransigence and partisanship.

The teachers, it must be said, highly appreciated the inclinations of their listeners. So, already in the first year he had "considerable critical abilities; good ability to summarize material. And in the third year, the future academician S.G. Strumilin assessed the report "Issues of the Theory of Wages in the USSR" as "quite satisfactory" work. In the same year, 1930, the report was published in the main theoretical organ of the CPSU(b), the journal *Bolshevik*. 'Good knowledge of the subject', 'maximum energy', 'taking into account the psychology of the individual listener', 'correctly pursued the line of the Party' - such assessments formed the general conclusion of the leadership of the IKP about the pedagogical and scientific abilities of their listener'.

How are these qualities embodied in everyday life? We have the opportunity to see Mekhlis from an unofficial side, through the eyes of Abdurakhman Avtorkhanov, who studied at the same time at the Faculty of History. This man, like the aforementioned Bazhanov, underwent a sharp evolution in his views. Having found himself in the West during World War II, he became a Sovietologist and a prolific historian. His book "The Technology of Power" helps to get an idea of the morals that reigned in the "theoretical headquarters of the Central Committee", about the violent clashes of supporters that took place there.

'RGASPI, f. 386, op. 1, d. 54, l. 1-206.

and opponents of the leader, about the role of individual Ikapists in them, including Mehlis.

On May 28, 1928, Stalin himself paid a visit to the ICP. Rector Academician M.N. Pokrovsky introduced Yudin, Konstantinov, Pankratova. "Stan, Karev, Mekhlis greeted themselves like old acquaintances," Avtorkhanov reports his observations. Let's remember these names. In a very short time, an insurmountable barricade will grow between their owners.

For what purpose did the leader come to the Ikapists? The fact is that back in the autumn of 1927, several major party leaders - members of the Politburo N.I. Bukharin, A.I. Rykov, M.P. Tomsy, secretary of the Moscow Party Committee N.A. Uglanov and others opposed the emergency measures proposed by the leader in grain procurements. Stalin declared them to be the initiators of the "right deviation". However, he could not ignore the fact that the oppositionists were well-known party leaders. The authority of the same Bukharin as a party theoretician was considered in the ICP to be indisputable. The positions of the "Bukharin school" that developed here (A.Yu. Aikhenvald, N.A. Karev, D.P. Maretsky, A.N. Slepko, Ya.E. Stan and others) were strong, its intellectual potential was high. . That is why Stalin considered it necessary to begin the defeat of the opposition precisely with the ICP, opposing them with his supporters.

He delivered a report "On the Grain Front", in which he determined the way to solve all the problems in the countryside - accelerated collective farm construction and "not for a minute" the unceasing struggle against the kulaks. The name of Bukharin or any of his like-minded people was not mentioned, but the anonymous "people" who, according to Stalin, speak of the need for every possible development of the kulak economy in the interests of the Soviet regime, received from him the definition of reactionaries. "To fail to understand the significance of large-scale kulak farming in the countryside ... it means to go mad, to break with Leninism, to defect to the side of the enemies of the working class," the high-ranking official summed up ominously.

guest.

Undoubtedly, it is much easier to beat bread out of collective farms than from individual owners, - such a conclusion was made for himself by the Secretary General, who made a trip to Si-

' Stalin and V. Op. T. 11. S. 88.

bir. He made for himself, publicly, a penchant for a confiscation policy, non-economic means of confiscating the products of the village, he draped with calls for a collective-farm revolution, promising huge "advantages in the production of marketable grain", which, in fact, turned out to be

imaginary.

Although the only fault of Bukharin and his like-minded people was in disagreement with the leader only in the methods of industrialization and cooperative agriculture, their verdict was a foregone conclusion.

But back to the ICP. The piquancy of the situation for Mekhlis consisted in the fact that for a long time he himself sinned with sympathy for Bukharin, and this was no secret to his teachers and fellow students. But, obviously, sympathy evaporated at once, as soon as Stalin declared Nikolai Ivanovich an oppositionist. Theodore Roosevelt put this phenomenon into a laconic aphorism a long time ago: there are no permanent friends in politics, only permanent interests. And Lev Zakharovich connected his interests with the winning side, with his longtime patron in the person of the General Secretary of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks.

In preparation for the defeat of Bukharin, a group of professors and senior students, including Mekhlis, went to Leningrad on instructions from the Central Committee. Here, in the strictest confidence under the guidance of S.M. Kirov conducted a revision of everything written by the "favorite of the party" (as Lenin called Bukharin), with the aim of proving the insignificance of the latter as a theoretician, and pettiness as a politician. As a result, a report was prepared at a meeting of the ICP activists, and Mekhlis, who was confidently walking up the mountain, was instructed to deliver it.

Recalls A.G. Avtorkhanov: "Mekhlis fulfilled the task brilliantly. Not a single statement, not a single thesis was "taken from the ceiling" - all this was justified by an infinite number of

large and small quotations from Marx, Engels, and especially from Lenin. Mekhlis devoted the last part of his report to the so-called "two ways" of agricultural development—capitalist and socialist. The speaker argued, but less successfully and less confidently, that the Bukharin school was pushing the party onto the capitalist path of development.

Concluding the speech, the speaker, however, "set himself up", repeating Stalin's Pharisaic words, which he took at face value, that the Central Committee condemns Bukharin's past mistakes, but now - in early

1928 - there are no "rightists" in the Politburo. Bukharin's students immediately clung to the speaker. One of them - I. Sorokin (his further fate is, unfortunately, unknown to the author) - conclusively convicted Mekhlis of conscious falsification of the Marxist-Leninist theory, of ignorance, stating at the end: "How low our theory has fallen if half-educated people have been allowed to it like Mehlis!"

Accusations of semi-knowledge were still flowers. Wishing to expose the hypocrisy of the speaker and Stalin, who stood behind him, Sorokin demanded to discuss not Bukharin's past, "archival" mistakes, but his current political face. At the same time, make such a discussion public, since the game of hide and seek is unworthy among like-minded people. And for this, to propose to Bukharin openly and in front of the whole party to state his own views, not trusting "the screamers from the theory, like Mekhlis."

The Stalinists were clearly confused. A public discussion would tie their hands and their owner, would not allow them to resort to the usual weapon of suppressing dissent - indiscriminate defamation of the victim without any chance for the latter to answer. The effect was intensified after the speech of Professor Stan, who drew the attention of those present to the moral aspect in the behavior of Mehlis: "When people who yesterday were not only Bukharin's first students, but also his personal squires, like Mehlis, begin to tell us about the fall of their teacher without opening. At the same time, the reasons for their betrayal of him, they always make a vile impression. Stan directly asked Mehlis: if yesterday he licked Bukharin's heels, then whose heels did he like today, and offered to tell about the history of "his own chameleonism in the party and renegade in Bukharin's group."

The meeting participants demanded that Lev Zakharovich give an answer on the merits of the claims made to him. The unlucky speaker at first tried to evade, asking to reschedule the meeting until tomorrow. "He must consult with new heels," resounded in the hall. But it wasn't ridicule that bothered our hero. He was much more frightened by the prospect of voting on the proposal that Sorokin introduced, but in fact he initiated it himself with his unsuccessful report: to invite Bukharin to speak in the press outlining his views on the current policy of the party. Such a vote would mean the political death of Mehlis. He could not

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not to understand: Stalin, by all means preventing a public polemic with Bukharin, would have received an extremely unpleasant surprise - a resolution of the PCI on giving him a wide rostrum. For this, one would have to answer for sure, perhaps not only to Lev Zakharovich, but to him - for sure.

And Mehlis decided to speak. He, as Avtorkhanov notes, "probably took the risk for the only time in his life... "I," he said, "was both a student of Bukharin and, perhaps, his squire, when this weapon accurately hit the Trotskyists, but I dropped it as soon as it rusted, and you, Stan, picked it up the moment it aimed at the heart of the party. You cannot blow up parties with such weapons, but they can blow up on your own head."

There was a fuss, the essence of the conversation was forgotten for some time, which was taken advantage of by the rector Pokrovsky, who announced a break "until tomorrow". Of course, the meeting did not continue, and the face of Mehlis and his like-minded people in the eyes of the leader was thus saved. And when, after some time, a meeting of theorists and propagandists of the party was held at the Communist Academy, he was already "on horseback" and tried to sell at a higher price

his "discovery". Paying tribute to the "exceptional modesty" of the leader, Mekhlis loudly brought "to the attention of the party that historical fact of the greatest importance, which the Bukharinites carefully concealed from it: Stalin is Lenin's only theoretical successor. The Party must finally know this truth, even through the head of Stalin's simplicity and modesty, since he belongs to the Party, just as the Party belongs to him!

Lev Zakharovich was not embarrassed that he declared a theoretician a man who two years ago, being put forward as a candidate member of the same Communist Academy, was almost unanimously voted out "due to Comrade Stalin's lack of special research in the field of Marxism". And in the ICP itself, the General Secretary, as a theorist of Marxism, was regarded rather as a figure of the "second echelon": in 1924-1925, unlike Zinoviev and Kamenev, he was not even invited to teach classes at the main department.

! Avtorkhanov A.G. Power technology. M., 1991. S. 116.

Stalin celebrated his victory over Bukharin at the April (1929) plenum of the Central Committee and the 17th party conference that took place soon after. The dull rumbles of the waning struggle between the Bukharinites and the Stalinists in the ICP continued for some time to be reported by the press. In November, Pravda published an article entitled "Factional Foray of the Rights (In the Cell of the Institute of Red Professors)". Below it is the signature of Mekhlis. He made a "bold" diagnosis: the Right deviation had gone over "to factional methods of struggle against the Party." In confirmation, an example was given with one of the listeners - E.V. Tsetlin. During the purge in the party cell, on the one hand, he expressed agreement with the general line of the party, and on the other hand, he did not consider Bukharin, Tomsy and their allies to be "right" and in this respect did not agree with the decisions of the April plenum of the Central Committee. What is this if not a factional sortie, asked Lev Zakharovich.

Seven years after the events described above, Pospelov, mentioned above, will characterize his classmate as a "steel Bolshevik". Recalling the days of joint study, he wrote that "the main Bolshevik core of the party organization of the ICP" rallied closely around Mekhlis. And he earned "the greatest trust and authority" "by his ardent devotion to the cause of the Lenin-Stalin party, his unchanging Bolshevik adherence to principles, his sensitive, party-like approach to comrades, and, finally, his deep knowledge of Marxism-Leninism and his colossal capacity for work." It is difficult to come up with a more clichéd, but, paradoxical as it may seem, correct characterization.

Work in the Central Committee of the party, and then study at the Institute of Red Professors became a determining factor in the political and moral evolution of Mekhlis. He made a personal acquaintance with the party and state leaders, mastered the technology of the secret, hidden, bypassing the formal procedures for resolving issues of national importance, joined the sharp behind-the-scenes struggle of the Stalinist group against its opponents. He made the final political choice in favor of Stalin and the methods that he used, breaking any opposition to himself.

At the same time, the degree of independence of Melis's actions was still limited by the framework of the party apparatus. He had yet to enter public politics.

### Chapter 3

THE ORDER HAS BEEN GIVEN TO HIM - ON THE "TRUTH"

### FIRE ON OPPORTUNISM OF ALL STRIPS

"Stronger fire on credit freeze." "Stronger fire on opportunism and rotten liberalism." These appeals from the editorials of Pravda were placed next to each other not so much by us as by their author, the responsible (chief) editor of the central press organ of the CPSU (b) Mekhlis (the first material was published on December 11, 1931, the second on December 25). At the same time, even, as we see, with the same words, but with the same fuse, with unbridled passion, Lev Zakharovich fought with opportunists of all stripes, it doesn't matter if they were from cooperation

or from politics. It seems a trifle, but it is precisely through such a trifle, a detail, a touch, that his idea of the role assigned to him with his appointment in May 1930 to the editorial office of Pravda is best seen.

The new editor was entrusted with completing the destruction of the Bukharin "rogue" in the main party newspaper, which until April 1929 was edited by Bukharin and where many of his supporters collaborated. In the conditions of a sharp intra-party struggle, Stalin and his supporters had to finally oust hostile or insufficiently loyal employees from here.

Back in June 1929, the Politburo abolished the post of executive editor in the editorial office of Pravda, and appointed an editorial board bureau consisting of G.I. Krumina, N.N. Popova and E.M. Yaroslavsky. Answering the protest of A.I. Rykov on this occasion, the Politburo on September 6 asserted that the correctness of such a decision was proved by the successful work of the editorial board. But a week later, on September 13, his supporters V.M. Molotov and G.K. Ordzhonikidze, Stalin wrote the exact opposite: "The guilt of the Central Committee lies in the fact that for a moment it let go of the steering wheel in relation to the bureau of the editorial board of Pravda, forgetting that there, in the bureau, sits an athlete from self-criticism, comrade Yaroslavsky, having the fortunate ability to see nothing further than one's own nose." In a new letter dated December 25, he generally

expressed the opinion that "the editorial board of Pravda is unfavorable" for the reason that former Trotskyists are "in charge" there!

At first, Mekhlis became the secretary of the editorial office - from the very revolution, Lenin's sister M.I. worked in this position. Ulyanov. And only the next year he took the chair of the editor-in-chief without any reservations. To all appearances, Mekhlis successfully withstood Stalin's test of how grasping he was under conditions when a strong party bridle was thrown at all spheres of spiritual life, how tough he was able to pursue the leader's line and instill unanimity as the norm.

The student was grateful to the teacher. Few people worked as hard as he did to consolidate the Stalinist cult in the minds of the masses, to organize propaganda hype around the personality of the leader and his every step in politics. So one of the most violent opponents of the regime, M.N. Ryutin had every reason in his famous platform "Stalin and the Crisis of the Proletarian Dictatorship" to call Pravda the "personal direct mouthpiece" of the leader.

The chief party journalist was already a sophisticated enough politician to understand that his choice by Stalin promised considerable prospects only if the newspaper became the leader's propaganda weapon against real or imagined competitors and opponents. "The place of Lenin's Pravda in the system of all newspapers..." he declared, "is quite obvious. "Pravda" should lead the struggle for the general line of our Party... It should lead the struggle and lead it against all varieties of opportunism"?

Becoming at the helm of the newspaper, Mekhlis published a lot in Pravda himself, especially at first. The range of his speeches is the widest: from glorifying the Stalinist guards to the problems of providing industry with a labor force and the elimination of depersonalization in lending to enterprises. Favorite genre - editorial. The straightforwardness and directiveness of tone, characteristic of editorials as a newspaper genre, were further intensified by the bilious, devoid of imagery, dry, drumming style of writing.

Letters to I.V. Stalin V.M. Molotov 1925-1936 M., 1995. S. 135, 165, 172. 2 RGVA, f. 40884, op. 1, d. 44, l. 59.

Everyone who surrounded the editor-in-chief noted his downright inhuman capacity for work. For many hours he wrote, corrected. He invariably personally signed the issue for printing, left home closer to dawn, when the rotary machines were started, and after an hour and a half called the duty officer, checking whether the printing and mailing schedule was being maintained. And so from day to day in a day.

But not personal creativity, but the political control of the newspaper was the main thing for him. The writer Lev Nikulin spoke in those days: "Every person within the walls of the editorial office knows that in the issue of Pravda there is not a single line that Comrade. Mekhlis. Every collaborator of Pravda, from the author of a long and scientific article to the author of a note of 10 lines, knows that his manuscript will be read and edited by Comrade. Mekhlis." Nikulin wanted to flatter the chief's rare industriousness. But against his will, he emphasized the main thing - the desire of him to control everything and everyone. Not a note, not a line, not a single word could get into the newspaper without passing through the thick sieve of the most blatant political censorship.

In accordance with his understanding of the tasks of the central printed organ of the Bolshevik Party, the new editor undertook a radical change. He shook up the whole apparatus and changed its structure. He introduced strict planning: carefully developed ten-day plans were added to the three-month plans, meetings were held daily. The local network of staff and freelance correspondents was significantly expanded. In a word, everything that was left from the previous leadership in organizational or creative terms was scrapped.

The arrival of Mekhlis in the newspaper coincided with the publication of the resolution of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks of November 11, 1930, which reflected the dissatisfaction of the party elite with the composition of the editorial teams, as well as the work on the selection, training and retraining of journalists and other categories of press workers. Therefore, the problem of personnel - their selection on the principle of absolute political loyalty, training, placement - became a priority in his work as an editor. Everyone who, in one way or another, turned out to be connected with any opposition, had politically questionable acquaintances or connections, was fired.

By restructuring the work of the newspaper, Lev Zakharovich achieved a lot: he significantly expanded the network of correspondent points in the field,

organized training of personnel, for which the Pravda Communist Institute of Journalism was opened, increased circulation, which already in 1931 reached almost 2 million copies, made the transition to new technologies - from June 1931, the newspaper began to be printed from matrices in largest industrial cities in the country.

From subordinates, Mekhlis demanded knowledge of the situation, harshly reproaching them for their lack of awareness, cabinet style: "You all need to disperse as soon as possible, disperse 100 percent. You don't know what's going on in the country, what's going on in industry... You don't have informants either in factories, factories, or people's commissariats," he instructed journalists.

Through the efforts of the editor-in-chief, the worker-selkor movement received a serious impetus. In December 1930, having 10,000 working correspondents, a year and a half later, the newspaper already had 50,000 freelance writers. In a resolution of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks dated April 16, 1931, Pravda's experience in creating press brigades was approved, recognized as "a model of the collective work of worker villagers." The newspaper was entrusted with the general direction of this movement throughout the country. The organization of visiting editorial offices at the largest construction sites of the first five-year plan—the Stalingrad Tractor Plant, Dneproges, and Magnitogorsk—was also widely introduced into practice.

The requirement for subordinates to know the situation on the ground well, to have complete information looks reasonable: a fact for a journalist is his bread and butter. But the question is, what real role did information play in the Stalinist state and did it reflect the realities of life?

With freedom of the press guaranteed by law, wide awareness of media workers is not just a norm, but also a professional obligation, because otherwise the reader, the viewer, without receiving the information of interest to him, will not be able to exercise his constitutional right to possess it. In the USSR, newspapers and radio, and later television, were not so much information channels as propaganda, and media workers most often did not themselves have truthful information on significant issues. Under these circumstances, the call for



journalists to know the situation and write the truth in practice meant the requirement to speak and write in a way that how beneficial to the authorities.

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On the other hand, they didn't have much choice: the entire Soviet press, and even more so the party press, worked strictly according to the directives that came "from above". What, for example, is such an instruction from Stalin (on September 2, 1930, he directly wrote to Molotov about it): it is necessary to "re-equip Pravda and our entire press in the spirit of the slogan: "to the collective farms", obliging them to dedicate them daily and systematically at least a page of facts about the influx of collective farms, facts about the advantages of collective farms over individual farming ... In a word, open an appropriate systematic and persistent campaign in the press for the collective farm movement ... "(emphasized everywhere by Stalin. - Yu.R.).

The fact that, in fact, the majority of the peasantry did their best to deny joining collective farms that were supposedly beneficial to them, the party ideologists were not interested in this case. If you press steps do not correspond to the facts of real life, then so much the worse for the facts.

The object of Mekhlis's attacks was any deviation from the course set by the regime. Somehow, the economic department earned a sharp reproach: it was about the need to organize the exposure of those scientists who published more abroad than at home, "and without a fee, they don't get anything - just print it." Our silence at the sight of such servility to the West is a shame, Lev Zakharovich fumed. But when we want, we can. Here appeared in Izvestia a small but "unhealthy" note by Academician N. Luzin, no one paid attention to it, except for Pravda. It's nothing, that respected scientist: in two days they unfolded the exposure of this low worshiper. Now he will be reluctant to meddle in the foreign press.

In 1935, for an article in the foreign press, one could be subjected to unfair and offensive criticism. Two years later, it could have cost you your life.

Generally speaking, the repressive policy throughout the entire Soviet history was a necessary condition for the viability of the system: it made it possible to keep society in obedience, to suppress dissent and opposition, to manipulate public opinion, to strengthen the sole power of the leader, to support the economy through direct coercion. to work.

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The activities of Pravda fully reflected the dialectic of the 1930s. Truth and fiction coexisted on the same pages, manifestations of sincere feelings and official propaganda of false moral values (like denunciation). On the one hand, the newspaper lived in the same rhythm with the country, showing the pace of industrialization, noting the leaders of the socialist competition. Many events in the country were covered in detail and on the whole objectively, through various newspaper genres, with the involvement of a wide range of professional journalists and writers, as well as the workers' activists. The commissioning of the Dneproges, the Chelyabinsk Tractor and Ural Machine-Building Plants, and many other industrial giants, the progress of the Stakhanov movement, the development of the Arctic and the construction of irrigation canals in Central Asia, the non-stop flights of Soviet aviators and the development of national cultures are what the Soviet Union lived then, was reflected in the newspaper pages. Excessive pathos, elation of the style of journalists was hardly a big sin, given the labor enthusiasm of the masses.

The newspaper much and often referred to the topics of patriotism, friendship of peoples, military duty, talked about the events in Spain, glorified the heroes of the battles on Lake Khasan, the border guards who distinguished themselves in protecting the country's borders, which, of course, contributed to the spiritual and moral preparation of the Soviet people for future military tests.

At the same time, the newspaper frightened readers with massive sabotage, the kulak danger, sowed suspicion and distrust in society, intrusively cultivating the notorious vigilance. Many even very large events that affected millions of Soviet people, if true information about them ran counter to the interests of the political leadership, are not reflected in it.  
found.

Try to find in Pravda of those years, for example, even the slightest trace of the famine of the early 1930s, into which the country was plunged by the Stalinist "revolution from above", and even more so the names of its true culprits. Meanwhile, according to far from complete data, the famine of 1932-1933 claimed the lives of at least 7.7 million people. In the course of collectivization, at least 1 million peasant farms, uniting 5-6 million people. More than one third of the dispossessed, or 2.14 million people were expelled in 1930-1933.

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us. Forced collectivization not only sharply weakened the economy, but also brought the country to the brink of civil war.'

In the newspaper, this tragedy of the Russian countryside, the tragedy of the country was presented as a victory for the collective farm system. Similarly, the lawlessness of the NKVD was glorified as an example of the sacred struggle on behalf of the people against their enemies, encroaching on the socialist gains of the working people. So much for the notorious "information"...

No, other topics flooded the newspaper area like a flooded sea. We will visit the meeting of the editorial board that took place in August 1935. The face of the newspaper is discussed - advanced and "cellars". Sixty of them were planned in advance, and about forty more during the meeting. What should they be about, what worries the Pravdists?

Nikolay Popov, executive secretary, proposes to entrust the development of the topic "Provincialism and parochialism" to Ilf and Petrov.

Evgeny Petrov: "What do you mean?"

Mehlis: "The people were in the mood that we don't have provincial themes at all and there is no provincialism. We are all building socialism both on Igarka and here. After that, we visited the provincial towns ... we talked about inertia, red tape, parochialism, which develops politically into a very sharp negative phenomenon. It is necessary to fight this, to raise people up so that they do not feel like scrawny, feel like members of the great party of the proletariat, citizens of the great Union.

Mikhail Koltsov: "I take this topic positively... What can be done to raise the level of our provincial town..."

Petrov: "Sometimes there is provincialism in Moscow, I understand that in this sense it is necessary to stage. This topic is very interesting..."

Ilya Ilf: "We will try for the first time in our lives."

Popov (reads further): "About the commander of the Red Army."

Koltsov: "Let me try."

Mehlis: "We have emphasized many times that when a regiment commander is appointed in Japan, it is known abroad... But in our country

Ivnitsky N.A. Collectivization and dispossession (early 1930s).

M., 1996. S. 224, 278.

the regimental commander is a mess..." (the front line is eventually entrusted to Koltsov).

Popov (reads the list): "Keep a state secret."

Mekhlis: "I affirm that this cutting-edge would make a splash. Now there will be an open trial of Japanese spies in Khabarovsk. Japan is not necessarily necessary, are there not enough German spies, don't we help the spies with our talkativeness. Here we are talking about the protection of enterprises, redistribution, etc."

The list is discussed further, as a result, Lev Nikulin is instructed to write on the topic "Hooliganism and politeness", Popov - on the flexibility of leadership, Anatoly Agranovsky - "Trade unions, women and children." Topics for feuilletons were also outlined here: about chatter, about the hidden work of churchmen, about a foreign tourist, about a housekeeper, about employees of restaurants, and so on. Truly, in the country of "victorious socialism" there were no more important and exciting topics, there were no conflicts for which the pen of feuilletonists would have caught on!

Obviously, the creative side was losing in the work of the journalistic team. "In the shortest possible time, not only did the atmosphere familiar to the editorial office disappear without a trace, but Pravda itself, which, although it was called the central organ of the party, was, in general, a normal newspaper, turned into a kind of categorically directive instance, - recalled one of the oldest employees, cartoonist Boris Yefimov. "Any objections and even the slightest doubt about any opinions printed on the pages of Pravda, overshadowed by the highest party grace, became impossible and simply unthinkable."

However, it would be naive to believe that Mekhlis, understanding the problems of provincialism and the dangers of chatter, forgot about the main thing - the formation of the cult of Stalin, the struggle for the purity of the "party line", exposing all those who wittingly or unwittingly refused to live according to Stalin laws.

The head of Pravda did his best to support the leader's claims to the sole interpretation of Marxism-Leninism and the history of the party. At the same time, sometimes he even went to the formal violation of the established order. In 1934, without even obtaining the consent of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks, he announced the tenth anniversary of Stalin's book On the Foundations of Leninism.

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At the same time, no moral considerations, no truth of history stopped him. So, on May 9, 1934, Pravda published Pospelov's review of N.K. Krupskaya about Lenin. Flair, with deliberate objectivity, was unable to hide the sharp reproaches addressed to the widow of the leader of the October Revolution that her memoirs did not adequately reflect Stalin's "leading role" in the creation and development of the Bolshevik Party.

Lev Zakharovich skillfully played along with the General Secretary in both big and small things. It is known that, playing for the audience, Iosif Vissarionovich allowed himself certain gestures of "modesty". The editor-in-chief spoke about one of them at the February-March plenum of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks in 1937. He read out a letter from the leader received back in 1930, and for greater effect he emphasized that he was doing this without the permission of the author: "Comrade. Mekhlis! Please print the attached instructive story of one collective farm. I crossed out in the letter the words about "Stalin" as the "leader of the party," "leader of the party," and so on. I think these laudatory decorations do (and cannot) do anything but harm. The letter should be printed without such epithets."

Now that's real devotion! For seven long years, the former assistant kept the owner's note in order to put it into action. And he found the most opportune moment to reinforce the myth of "comrade Stalin's exceptional modesty."

As in his time as Stalin's secretary, Mekhlis continued to provide the leader with serious services in his fight against political opponents. Historians have information that in the early 1930s, despite the repressions, local opposition to Stalin's course still arose.

So, the chairman of the Council of People's Commissars of the RSFSR, a candidate member of the Politburo S.I. Syrtsov, together with like-minded people, coordinating their actions with a group of a member of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks, the first secretary of the Transcaucasian regional committee of the party V.V. Lominadze, discussed the possibility of suppressing the Stalinist command-bureaucratic methods of implementing the political course. A prominent former party member M.N. Ryutin, led "conversations of an anti-party nature", arguing that "the policy of the ruling core in the party, headed by Stalin, is disastrous for the country", and predicted its complete bankruptcy. Expelled from the party for this, he, together with V.N. Kayurov

and M.S. Ivanov in August 1932 created the "Union of Marxist-Leninists" - an organization that "does not oppose itself to the party, but opposes only Stalin and his clique."

In the archives of the Hoover Institution for War, Revolution and Peace, in the P.B. Struve, is kept sent in the 30s from the USSR by a certain Vasily Molotoboyets (obviously a pseudonym) "The Poem about the Bedlag". This work, although not very perfect from a poetic point of view, testifies that not everyone in our country was fooled official propaganda and well understood the essence of the Great Leap Forward policy:

I want to eat, I live without washing my snout,

From Marxism in the heart of longing:

Without washing, lice, without soap,

I'll wait for the rash soon.

It is bad to live, if it became empty in the belly, If there is a shortage, poverty around.

Who is to blame for this devastation?

Everyone knows, but their mouths are chained.

Silencing the anger of the people's cries, Stalin whistles louder than a nightingale: "Comrade Rykov is to blame for everything. Previously - Trotsky, but not me! So, according to the plan of strength, we will triple,

We'll climb on the rampage in a hurry,

Having ruined the peasants, we are building Collectives by force - in the memory of Ilyich.

We build factories and blast furnaces, without sparing human lives... You know, the achievements are enormous. No floorboards, no nails. I'm not afraid of fists threats, They now do not count the bones.

'See: Power and Opposition. pp. 150-151.

"77

I sent hundreds of thousands of women and children into exile in the cold!

The men are for logging. Starikov - to Murman and to prison. Revolvers and rifles serve me To defeat ignorance and darkness. Some kind of bastard enveloped my mind. As if I live for several centuries. In my haste, I confused the Srednyaks and even the poor for the kulaks.

Well, to hell with them! I see through a prism

The distant life of bright colors.

It is easier for us to march towards socialism,

If the road is filled with blood.

All the same monologues:

"Our success", "We build", "We must!" Not even a quarter of the way

I broke the foundations of the whole country.

In the USSR, every minute my despotism does not pass in vain. I eclipsed the cruelty of Malyuta, Ivan the Terrible Tsar.

Know me, peasant and worker. Compete, sweat streams.

In cities and villages, days and nights, my guardsmen press you.

The documents that became available to researchers made it possible to reveal the role of Mehlis in identifying and defeating the "right-"leftist" bias" represented by S.I. Syrtsova, V.V. Lominadze and their supporters. Syrtsov tried to convict the general secretary of one of the most terrible crimes against the party since the Tenth Congress of the RCP(b) - factionalism. In his opinion, which he shared with Lominadze and a group of other like-minded people, Stalin preferred to rely not on the entire composition of the Politburo, but only on an elected

a circle of associates, gathering them into separate, strictly secret meetings, where most of the most important party and state decisions were decided.

Stalin actually resorted to such a practice of factional meetings with the closest supporters at any given moment, forbidden by the charter, from the 1920s, which Mekhlis was well aware of. If Syrtsov succeeded in making his accusations widely publicized, the reputation of the General Secretary could be seriously tarnished. Syrtsov raised all these questions at several informal meetings with a small group of like-minded people!

After one of these meetings on October 21, 1930, close to Syrtsov B.G. Reznikov wrote a denunciation and addressed it not to anyone, but to Mekhlis. He, without delaying a minute, at night, delivered a denunciation to the leader. The next morning, the Central Control Commission and the OGPU joined the proceedings. On November 4, a joint meeting of the Politburo and the Central Control Commission was held, which considered the question "On the factional work of Comrades. Syrtsov, Lominadze, Shatskin and others. The first two were accused of creating a "right-"leftist" bloc, whose platform allegedly coincided with the views of the "right deviation." They were withdrawn from the Central Committee, and their like-minded L.A. Shatskin (head of the Komsomol in the 1920s), from the Central Control Commission, about which Mekhlis did not hesitate to inform the readers of Pravda. But that was only a temporary respite. Lominadze in 1935, under the yoke of suspicion, committed suicide, and Syrtsov and Shatskin in 1937 were sentenced to capital punishment and shot.

Even deaf and rare evidence, breaking through the barriers of the special guard, testifies to the direct involvement of Mekhlis in the subsequent reprisals against the opponents of the Kremlin ruler. According to Bukharin's testimony, the chief Pravdist was summoned and instructed by Stalin in December 1934 when investigating the circumstances of Kirov's assassination, while he was pointed to the "Zinoviev" trail of the murderer. The consequences of this briefing are reflected in the pages of Pravda, which are filled with vulgar swearing at Zinoviev and Kamenev.

Stalin's Politburo in the 1930s. Sat. documents. M., 1995. S. 96—

The newspaper actively prepared the country's public opinion for the perception of leaders of the "right deviation" as conspirators, agents of foreign intelligence, spies and saboteurs. For this, Mekhlis resorted to the most unworthy methods. On October 28, 1936, Pravda published an editorial in which Rykov was portrayed as a "Menshevik henchman" who allegedly advocated Lenin's appearance at the trial of the Provisional Government (Stalin himself, by the way, advocated this). Protesting against this obvious lie, Rykov sent a letter to the General Secretary, which remained unanswered. Bukharin also sharply objected to the halo of the enemy created around him. In February 1937 letters to Stalin and the Politburo, he protested that Pravda was already out

from the proof of the accusations against him, calls him an agent of the Gestapo. But what did the editor of Pravda and his all-powerful curator care about these protests!

And, of course, none of the numerous political trials — and they mostly fell on the times when Mekhlis was at the helm of the newspaper — did not escape its pages. It was Pravda that was the first to publish the transcripts of the trials of Kamenev, Zinoviev, Bukharin and other real or imaginary oppositionists, and calls to “crush the reptile” were heard most loudly from its pages. Materials of this nature were intended for a politically naive, undemanding reader, who was already to a large extent duped by official propaganda, and therefore achieved their goal.

Even foreign friends of the Soviet Union paid attention to the unseemly role of the Soviet press as a whole and its “vanguard” in whipping up hysteria and spy mania. Thus, on the eve of the third Moscow trial of Bukharin, Rykov, Krestinsky and other members of the “right-wing Trotskyist bloc” in March 1938, the leaders of the 11th International and the International Federation of Socialist Trade Unions sent a telegram to Moscow, in which they drew attention to the harm that was caused by “these trials and executions” to the international labor movement. Particular concern was expressed about the official press, “condemning all the defendants without distinction even before any evidence of their guilt is presented. Such behavior seems to us to be completely contrary to the elementary principles of justice and capable of creating an atmosphere harmful

For

impartial conduct of the process. But it was not so easy to convince the organizers of the Moscow trials.

The hands of Mekhlis, long before he became the head of the chief political agency of the Red Army, were stained with reprisals against the highest military ranks. In January 1937, he received a letter from his own correspondent in Berlin, A. Klimov, which allegedly contained reliable information that in Germany “among the highest officer circles, they persistently talk about the connection and work of the German fascists at the top of the command staff of the Red Army in Moscow. In this regard, the name of Tukhachevsky is called. He sent a letter to Stalin, thereby becoming one of the channels of disinformation, skillfully worked out, as it turned out later, in the department of V. Schellenberg, chief of the VI department of the RSHA - the department of imperial security of fascist Germany. On the other hand, Mekhlis readily published deliberately false fabrications, born in the bowels of the Central Committee and the NKVD, about conspirators with marshal's stars in their buttonholes. The question is, who, then, was the true enemy of the people?

The editor-in-chief of Pravda blocked the appearance in the press of information about the facts of lawlessness that was happening in the party organizations of the army and navy, and, conversely, the courageous behavior of servicemen who stood up for the honor of slandered comrades. In April 1937, from an article by a Crimean correspondent, he learned about what had happened on the battleship Paris Commune. There, the party bureau severely reprimanded the military commissar Bakulin for attempting to indiscriminately accuse an honest man of ties with “enemies of the people,” and the head of the political department of the fleet, army commissar of the 2nd rank G.I. Gugin petitioned the PU of the Red Army for the removal of Bakulin from his post. This was written by the naval newspaper Krasny Chernomorets. Having received an article by his own correspondent in Crimea, on April 14, Mekhlis informed Stalin, Kaganovich, Andreev, Zhdanov, Yezhov and Voroshilov: “We do not intend to publish his correspondence in Pravda. The facts about which the correspondent writes, as well as the fact that all this is painted over on the pages of Krasny Chernomorets, make us sound the alarm. It is hardly expedient to discuss such issues in this form on the pages of local Red Army newspapers. As they say, and the whole story.

Lev Zakharovich, of course, vigilantly followed the slightest changes in the Kremlin, having firmly mastered the rules of the game, which allowed him to

to be all the time in the camp of "a faithful disciple and continuer of Lenin's work." At the same time, within the limits of what was permitted by these rules, he was quite independent and assertive.

Writer D.I. Ortenberg told the author: "In 1937, I worked as a staff correspondent for Pravda in the Dnepropetrovsk region. Somehow a party asset took place. Although the issue of criticism and self-criticism was on the agenda, the speech of the secretary of the regional committee, Khataevich, was round, conciliatory to shortcomings, about which the newspaper printed my critical correspondence. I received a note from Khatayevich: I will, they say, demand that you be removed from the region. I rushed to Moscow. I went to Mekhlis, showed a note from the secretary of the regional committee. Lev Zakharovich took her - and to Stalin. The editor of Pravda was, of course, a notable post, but Khataevich also had great authority in the party. However, Mekhlis boldly went into conflict with him, boldly defended his correspondent.

Knowing the fate of Khatayevich, a Bolshevik with pre-revolutionary experience who did not survive 1937, one can assume that Mekhlis ran to the owner not to protect the truth and the correspondent. Compromising evidence was already being collected against the secretary of the Dnepropetrovsk Regional Committee.

In any case, it was not Khataevich that the editor of Pravda offered as a model to young people who thought about making a life with whom. A transcript of the meeting of the editorial board, which discussed preparations for the elections to the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, has been preserved. Speaking about the need to talk about the "heroes of our days" before the elections, Mekhlis named the names of party leaders: "Levanevsky (pilot, first Hero of the Soviet Union. - R.R.) in the Union is known to every pioneer, every child, and if you take Vareikis (Secretary of the Far Eastern Territorial Committee of the CPSU(b), later repressed. - Yu.R.), then he is known much less. Take Beria, Khrushchev (heads of party organizations in Georgia and Moscow, respectively. - Yu.R.) - these are all the cadres that we need to popularize.

Among those who were "popularized" by the newspaper were many military leaders who had not yet become "spies" and "saboteurs" by that time. Lev Zakharovich had known some of them since the Civil War, for example, the legendary Marshal Blyukher, whose name had been resounding since the time of Kakhovka and Volochaevka. Ying

An interesting episode was told to the author by the marshal's widow, Glafira Lukinichna. In 1935, on the days when the 15th anniversary of the capture of the Crimea was celebrated, Pravda (probably Mekhlis himself) and at the same time Izvestia agreed with Blucher on an article by that date. Not wanting to offend anyone, Vasily Konstantinovich, without publicity, handed over the material simultaneously to both newspapers. A few days later, the article was published: in Pravda in an abbreviated version, in Izvestia in full. The husband then said to Glafira Lukinichna: "Someday I will pay dearly for this." He had in mind not only the possible resentment of the chief Pravdist at the fact that the article was also submitted to Izvestia at the same time. The main thing is that Vasily Konstantinovich did not mention about him, Mekhlis, a certain special role in the battles on the Kakhov bridgehead. Unfortunately, insight did not let the marshal down.

The repressions did not bypass the editorial staff of Pravda either. Any testimonies that have come down from those dark years become truly golden, especially if they belong to people with a sharp writer's eye, which undoubtedly included Mikhail Koltsov, then a member of the editorial board of Pravda. He, very soon himself repressed, pointed to the direct involvement of Mekhlis in the massacres of journalists. "The other day I went to Mekhlis and found him reading some thick notebook," Koltsov told his brother, the artist B. Yefimov. — These were the testimonies of the recently arrested Izvestia editor Tal. "Forgive me, Misha," he said to me with his smile, "I have no right, you understand, to let you read it. But if you want, look at his (that is, Stalin. Emphasized by Efimov. - Yu.R.) resolution. I watched. It was written in red pencil: "To Comrades Yezhov and Mekhlis. Read together and arrest all the scoundrels mentioned here. I.S."".

In his conjectures that Stalin and his entourage mutually fed each other's suspicions, Koltsov was not far from the truth. One can agree with Boris Efimov's assumption: it is possible that, most likely, Mekhlis sowed distrust in Stalin's mind towards "Don Miguel" (under this name Koltsov was in Spain, from where he returned shortly before his arrest).

' Rehabilitated posthumously. 2nd ed. M., 1989. S. 66-67.

## HESITATE WITH PARTY LINE

Contrary to the common perception, Stalin's policy was not at all consistent, but depending on the situation, it shied from side to side, so much so that the leader of Pravda did not always manage to catch the next turn in time.

Sometimes punctures happened over trifles. On March 30, 1931, the Central Committee reprimanded him, as well as other members of the editorial board Saveliev and Popov, due to the fact that Pravda did not properly respond to the anniversary of A.M. Gorky. Two more reprimands followed on behalf of the Politburo "for not publishing an article in Pravda in connection with the opening of the session of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee" and for underestimating the course of spring sowing. Later, at the personal request of the punished, they were removed.

But there were punctures and more significant. So, covering the processes of collectivization, on April 19, 1931, Pravda published a note "The counter-revolutionary sortie of the kulaks", which reported that the visiting session of the Moscow Regional Court in the city of Efremov considered the case on charges of 16 kulaks and sub-kulakists "in counter-revolutionary actions against the Soviet regime. The author reported with satisfaction that five of the defendants were sentenced to death by firing squad.

Seeing in the fact of such a sentence a violation of the established order, according to which sentences in political cases with capital punishment can only be issued with the sanction of the Central Committee, the Politburo adopted a special resolution the very next day. The said verdict was declared "grossly erroneous", and "placement of a note about this verdict in Pravda was inadmissible". The Supreme Court of the RSFSR undertook to cancel the decision of the Moscow Regional Court and consider the case again, and the newspaper to publish the results of this consideration. Which was done exactly and without any delay.

The devastating consequences of collectivization, expressed in a significant decrease in the production of marketable grain, its increased removal from the village literally "under the whisk", the rationed distribution of food in the cities led to famine. People who did not receive support from the state began to massively plunder agricultural products both directly from the fields and

field camps, and during transportation. The authorities fought them with "draconian" (Stalin's own definition) methods.

On August 7, 1932, the Central Executive Committee and the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR, on the initiative of the leader and, in fact, in its wording, adopted a resolution "On the protection of property of state enterprises, collective farms and cooperation and the strengthening of public (socialist) property". Mehliis considered it necessary to publish its text twice, on August 8 and 9, after which the authorities began to zealously enforce it. By January 15, 1933, more than 100,000 people had been convicted under it, of which 4,880 were sentenced to capital punishment, while more than 70 percent of those convicted were in the collective farm and state farm sector.

The central printed organ of the party, as it turned out, did not catch the importance that the top leadership attached to the implementation of this document, popularly called the "law on spikelets." Ten days after the publication of the decree, Stalin, in a personal letter to Kaganovich, expressed dissatisfaction with the sluggish reaction of the newspapers to him. Pravda, in his assessment, "behaves stupidly and bureaucratically-blindly, not opening a broad campaign on the issue of enforcing the law on the protection of public property. The campaign must begin immediately" (Stalin's italics. - Yu.R.).

Here, the Secretary General outlined a whole program of urgent measures for the Pravdists: to criticize and expose regional, city and district, including rural, organizations that "are trying to shelve the law," as well as judges and prosecutors who are showing



liberalism towards plunderers; sentences in such cases to be published "in a conspicuous place"; encourage those organizations that are active in enforcing the law; mobilize and instruct the correspondent staff, regularly publish materials on this topic.

Mekhlis immediately began to correct his mistake. As early as August 20, Pravda published a collection entitled "Public Property Is Sacred and Inviolable," which contained a review of letters on combating theft in transport, a critical signal about the underestimation of the decree of August 8 in the Ulyanovsk region, and other materials.

' Zelenin I.E. "Law of five spikelets": development and implementation. // Questions of History, 1998, No. 1. P. 121.

Subsequently, the campaign quickly gained momentum. On August 21, the entire third page came out under the caption: "The plunderers of socialist property - enemies of the people - to severe responsibility!" In addition to other materials, the first report about the death sentence by the Chelyabinsk District Court was placed here. On the 22nd, information was published about a court session that passed a death sentence in one of the villages of the Samara Region, and on the 24th, about the same verdict in the case of a robbery on a railway transport. The newspaper was full of catchy headlines such as "Socialist property is the basis of our system", "Plunderers - to account", calls for the courts and the prosecutor's office to show ruthlessness to those who coveted public or collective farm property.

But then, on September 16, 1932, another collection "Lack of control helps theft and embezzlement" came out, and then, as it was cut off, materials of this kind disappeared from the newspaper. Only the editor-in-chief knew the true reason in Pravda. On that day, the Politburo issued a secret decree obliging editors to "stop publishing court reports on embezzlement cases and reports on sentencing in the newspapers."

The past month has shown that glasnost, which Stalin advocated so much for, has the opposite effect. The information that in this or that region, collective farm, a person was convicted, or even shot, for two dozen spikelets or a handful of grain, not only did not prompt the approval of the authorities, but aroused indignation among people who experienced malnutrition, and even the most real hunger.

It could not have been otherwise, since the proclaimed "glasnost" was in fact its opposite. The newspapers did not name the real causes of the tragedy, which consisted in the gross arbitrariness of the authorities, their complete disregard for the economic laws of the development of agriculture, and laid responsibility not on the real perpetrators of the famine, but on some "enemies of the collective farm system", often adolescents, children, who were legally allowed to apply the same criminal penalties as adults. So I had to give a command to the press - not to report on the verdicts. The courts, in large numbers, carried them out as before.

Heading Pravda, Mekhlis, of course, was guided primarily by the instructions of Stalin and the decisions of the Politburo, which in the first half of the 1930s still retained some influence as

collective authority. Nevertheless, while entering the middle stratum of the party-state leadership (he became a candidate member of the Central Committee of the party in 1934), he was forced to reckon with the departmental ambitions of other top leaders. Members of the Politburo quite painfully defended the interests of the departments they headed before each other, reacted extremely sharply to criticism, including from the press. There were facts, especially during the period when Mekhlis was becoming the editor-in-chief, when Pravda also fell under the retaliatory blow of departmental leaders.

On July 8, 1931, she published a material that criticized the head of the industrial sector of the State Planning Commission, Levin. At the commission for the cleansing of the State Planning Commission, he allegedly called the reality of the state plan into question, calling it a "shark's letter." The newspaper called on the purge commission and the party cell to put such "opportunists" in their place. This, howev

the matter was not limited. Mehlis decided to give a political dimension to the incident. On July 15, Pravda published a lengthy rhyming reply to Akulina Frolova, born from the imagination of the poet A. Bezymensky, under the heading "To the Neighborhood of the Party." The Komsomol member-shock worker, denouncing Levin, promised to overfulfill all plans and thereby shame the unbelievers.

Member of the Politburo, chairman of the State Planning Committee V.V. reacted very painfully to the publication. Kuibyshev. He achieved not only the creation of a special commission of the Politburo to investigate the case, but also a resolution that, in particular, read: "Regardless of the mistakes made by Comrade Levin and timely revealed by Pravda, to admit that Pravda acted incorrectly, by publishing a note about Comrade Levin (where Comrade Levin is incorrectly qualified as a "near-Party inhabitant") and a poem by Comrade Bezymensky without the knowledge of the secretaries of the Central Committee." In addition, at the direction of Stalin, who was informed of Levin's complaint that his position was incorrectly reflected in the newspaper, the Orgburo ordered Pravda to give an explanation rehabilitating Levin. |

It also happened that Stalin, for some reasons known to him alone, did not want to openly criticize the people's commissars who were members of the Politburo, and chose Pravda as his instrument.

'RGASPI, f. 17, op. 114, d. 251, l. 4.

In the spring of 1933, the central printed organ of the party literally attacked the newspaper of the People's Commissariat of Heavy Industry "For Industrialization". The fact is that the departmental newspaper advocated the replacement of rigidly centralized supply and the revival of self-financing, the rejection of the card distribution of consumer goods and their free sale at market prices.

Pravda twice came out with devastating editorials, branding such a line as a departure from the general course of the party and a manifestation of capitulation. There is reason to believe that such harsh assessments Mekhlis previously agreed with Stalin, because in fact the blow was delivered not to the position of the newspaper, but to the position of the people's commissar of heavy industry, Sergo Ordzhonikidze.

The conflict between the general secretary and the people's commissar, a member of the Politburo, remained in the background, while the general readership could only guess why the editor of Pravda attacked the editor of the newspaper For Industrialization, V.S. Bogushevsky. After Pravdin's criticism, Bogushevsky was removed from his post by decision of the Politburo, and the Secretariat of the Central Committee was instructed to review the composition of the newspaper's editorial board.

The frenzy of Mekhlis was so noticeable that it brought to life a caricature performed by the chairman of the State Planning Commission V.I. Mezhlaukom at one of the meetings of the country's top leadership.

Analyzing domestic politics in the USSR in 1935-1936, modern historians speak of an attempt made by the authorities to somewhat pacify society. The most acute crisis in the economy, famine, rampant terror, which affected a significant part of the population of the country, primarily in the countryside, reduced the economic and social base of the political regime, threatened its very existence. The Stalinist leadership intended to achieve stability through reconciliation with at least a part of those sections of the "socially alien" population that in previous years were subjected to discrimination and repression - "disenfranchised", special settlers, that is, hundreds of thousands of "kulaks" expelled and deprived of their rights during the period of collectivization, the Cossacks of the North Caucasian and Azov-Black Sea regions, who were on suspicion of the Soviet authorities since the time of the Civil War, and others. Restrictions related to social origin were canceled for admission to universities and technical schools. Since the spring of 1936, they got the opportunity to serve in the Red

Army of the Cossacks. After the 2nd Congress of Collective Farmers-Shock Workers in February 1935, a certain guarantee was given for the maintenance and expansion of personal subsidiary plots. In industry, the policy of material incentives has become more active.

Pravda directly and directly reflected in its publications this tactical maneuver in the policy of the leadership. It is characteristic that it was from its pages that the signal to start this noisy campaign was heard all over the country: the famous remark "the son is not responsible for the father", which was given by Stalin at the meeting of the advanced combine operators of the USSR, was made public | December 1935 during a speech by the collective farmer A.G. Tilbes; fist's son.

In line with "appeasement", a demand was made to dampen the demonstration of the struggle against various kinds of opposition. "It would be completely intolerable, wrong and erroneous, if Pravda filled its pages with materials coming from the localities about the Trotskyists..." Lev Zakharovich instructed his subordinates in September 1936. - This would create a false impression abroad about the situation in the country, would help the Germans to inflate the campaign, report on the general uprising, Trotskyist cells, etc., as if Trotskyism had grown here in the country ... Now we are invited to trace so that all printing does not create a false impression. I'm not saying that we won't write at all, but once again you shouldn't make noise about this. "

The potential for "appeasement" was, however, rather quickly exhausted. In domestic politics, "tightening the screws" again prevailed, and the time for the "Great Terror" of 1937-1938 was beginning.

At least since the February-March plenum of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks in 1937, the top political leadership of the USSR explained the reasons for the repressions by the need to destroy the "fifth column" on the eve of the war - individuals, social groups and organizations dissatisfied with the Soviet government and ready to go to war. alliance with anti-communist forces abroad. This version permeates the indictments of all political trials of the 1930s and early 1950s, it was actively developed by Soviet historians, and Molotov, one of the initiators and most active participants in the repressions, insisted on it until the end of his life.

The ideas of Stalin and the leaders who supported him about the presence of some kind of "fifth column" were far from the real action.

validity. The presence in the country of forces capable of effectively supporting an external aggressor from within in the event of an attack on the USSR is not confirmed by historical facts (the numerous falsified trials of "enemies of the people" should not be considered as such confirmation). But this does not make the problem of understanding the nature, causes, and driving forces of repression easier. V.Z. Rogovin, for example, saw their socio-political meaning in the final break of Stalinism with the ideological and political legacy of the October Revolution. He defends (following Trotsky) the version of a counter-revolutionary, Thermidorian coup by Stalin, seeing the specifics of the extermination campaign against Bolshevism in that it was carried out by the Stalinist clique under the guise of Bolshevik phraseology and symbolism. Unlike him, D.A. Volkogonov, A.S. Tsipko and others considered Stalinism to be a direct outgrowth of Bolshevism, from which the roots of the "Great Terror" are derived.

The author shares the point of view of those researchers (O.V. Khlevnyuk and others) who do not reduce the causes of the repressions of the 1930s to the evil will of the CPSU(b) leader. It was a process deliberately organized and planned on a state scale, carried out under the control and on the initiative of the top leadership of the USSR in order to radically update the ruling elite..

The repressive policy, which had been a necessary condition for the viability of the system since 1917, a factor in social relations and an instrument of social transformation, in its relatively mild forms, by the mid-1930s, ceased to suit Stalin and his inner circle. It provided only limited opportunities to overcome the hidden resistance of a powerful layer of the nomenklatura, which aspired to at least relative independence. The leader chose the path of personnel purge in order to put forward a layer of new leaders who owe their careers to him, and therefore completely devoted to him.

Destroying millions of compatriots, the dictator and his entourage were simply afraid of losing or weakening their own power. They presented their narrowly corporate interests as

interests of the people, and the manifestation of any, even constructive, opposition

! Totalitarianism in Europe of the 20th century. M., 1996. S. 77, 79; Khlevnyuk O.V. 1937: Stalin, the NKVD and Soviet society. M., 1992. S. 6.

they explained to the masses the significance of their policy as the presence of the notorious "FIFTH COLUMN".

In the "great terror" Mekhlis immediately took a prominent place. His speech at the February-March plenum of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks in 1937, from which, in essence, mass repressions began, was in many respects a milestone. It was necessary to publicly make it clear to the leader that he, the editor-in-chief of Pravda, could fully rely on him. In terms of the significance of the issues raised, the speaker compared the plenum with a party congress, "gracefully" admitting that not everyone sees this: "There is a big brainwashing ahead so that people understand this."

The speech was provocative. Without solid grounds, Mekhlis spoke of the "extraordinary contamination" of newspaper editorial offices at all levels by former Mensheviks, Socialist-Revolutionaries, and members of various oppositions. Under the guise of "misprints and misprints," the speaker escalated the situation, the Trotskyists are rabidly criticizing the Party and discrediting the top leadership.

Then, emphasizing the "special modesty" of Stalin, which the reader already knows, Mekhlis attacked the leaders of the regional party organizations E.K. Pramneka (Gorky), K.V. Ryndina (Chelyabinsk), I.D. Kabakov (Sverdlovsk), P.P. Postysheva (Kyiv). Even more ominous were accusations of an incorrect response to Pravda's signals about the dominance of the Trotskyists against B.P. Sheboldaeva (Azov-Black Sea Territory) and M.M. Khataevich (Dnepropetrovsk region). It would not be superfluous to say that all of them were soon repressed.

In his characteristic manner, the orator attacked the already doomed enemy, criticizing N. Osinsky (V.V. Obolensky), the former "left communist", that he used to praise Bukharin, and now, under the pretext of scientific work, is going "from - sit down" while the party launched a struggle against the "enemies of the people".

The pogrom, unbridled tone of speech, apparently, was to Stalin's taste. To his benevolent question: "About Pravda, will you say something?", he received the following answer, which in a different situation would have bordered on insolence: "If they give me the floor later," and accepted it approvingly. This can only mean one thing: according to the leader, Mekhlis successfully mastered the role of a propaganda mouthpiece for the upcoming repressions.

## ON THE THEORETICAL FRONT

The time of work in Pravda became the period of the most active "theoretical" and journalistic activity of Lev Zakharovich. The concept of "active" is, however, relative. He did not create major monographic works. The number of his articles in scientific journals, in various collections is also small: for 1930-1937 there are no more than two dozen of them.

It should be noted that the author is not aware of a single case when Mekhlis publicly declared his claims to the role of a party theorist. However, he willingly acted as a propagandist, popularizer of Stalin's speeches and speeches, decisions of the highest party bodies, entered into polemics with participants in the anti-Stalinist OPPOSITIONS.

By the way, in November 1935, the chief Pravdist became a doctor of economic sciences, and was kindly exempted from preparing a dissertation. This royal gift - a degree without defending a dissertation - was presented to him by the Bureau of the Presidium of the Communist Academy. Well, it was in the spirit of the time: world famous scientists - N.I. Vavilova, N.N. Luzina, A.V. Chayanova, N.A. Chichibabin (that list is long) - to persecute, and fake, but devoted to the regime, doctors of science - to produce. In this regard, one cannot help but recall that the Mekhlis family

for years, she was touchingly friendly with the unforgettable Olga Lepeshinskaya, assistant to the "People's Academician" T.D. Lysenko in the eradication of domestic genetics.

The articles and pamphlets of Mekhlis, which claimed to be theoretical, are epigone in nature. They contain abundant quotations of the classics of Marxism-Leninism and, of course, Stalin, crackling phraseology, endless accusations against ideological "saboteurs", "counter-revolutionary smugglers", "enemies of the people of all stripes". The problems basically boiled down to the following: the successes of socialist construction, the class struggle, the justification for the need to liquidate the remnants of the exploiting classes, the situation on the "ideological front" (in the field of historical science, literature, and the training of ideological cadres).

It would seem that Mekhlis had to understand economic issues to the greatest extent, given the basic education received at the IKP. And in fact? Here is the article "Second

five-year plan and

liquidation of classes", published later as a separate pamphlet and dedicated to the results of the XVII Party Conference (April 1932). It was executed in the spirit of immoderate enthusiasm for the successes: "Questions of socialist construction have been raised by the Party Conference to an exceptionally high theoretical height," its decisions "on building a socialist society in the second has nothing to do." But, contradicting himself, he immediately falls into condemned scheme-mongering, proving with the help of a pile of figures that already in 1932 the first five-year plan will be completed ahead of schedule in four years. And in a new article, giving an assessment of the January Plenum of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks in 1933, which summed up the results of the five-year plan, he speaks of its early implementation as a *fait accompli*.

Modern historians and economists have convincingly proved that the fulfillment of the plans for the first five-year plan, especially when it was declared ahead of schedule, is in fact a propaganda myth. Planned indicators of gross industrial output, even without taking into account the increase in wholesale prices, were met by no more than 94 percent. The five-year plan was not fulfilled in the smelting of iron and steel, the production of rolled products, mineral fertilizers, the extraction of iron ore, the production of electricity, the production of tractors and automobiles, and other important indicators. Undoubtedly, the leaders of the CPSU(b) resorted to the myth of its early implementation quite deliberately, because the publication of real indicators was tantamount to recognizing the adventurism of the Great Leap Forward policy, which would completely undermine the confidence of the masses in the political regime. In the name of its preservation, frank disinformation of the population was carried out.

For these purposes, a huge propaganda apparatus worked, at the helm of which, among other functionaries, was Mekhlis, who used a whole range of means: from direct misleading readers to the substitution of political economic concepts and speculation on the class struggle factor. At the same time, it is necessary to emphasize

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Mekhlis L.Z. The Second Five-Year Plan and the Elimination of Classes. M. - Samara, 1932.

take a bite: Lev Zakharovich in all this invariably followed his spiritual mentor.

"The political results of the five-year plan cannot be reduced only to the figure of gross output for four years," he declared, referring to the General Secretary, who, in a report at the January plenum, contrary to historical truth, stated: in the country (meaning the pre-revolutionary Russia) did not have ferrous metallurgy, the automotive and aviation industries, and a number of other industries, but they were created in the USSR. Mekhlis, not embarrassed, asserted the same untruth, although a few paragraphs above he vehemently scourged the "vile lies" of the "lackeys of imperialism".

Where his own lies would be too obvious to the masses, he resorted to substitution. The assertion that the USSR turned "from a country of small-scale production into a country

he backed up with the figures cited by Stalin at the KhUP party conference: 60 percent of peasant farms are united in collective farms, and collective farm production covers 80 percent of the sown area. But in itself the socialization of the land wedge and the inventory of individual farmers is not an indicator of effective commodity production. The transformation into the country of "the largest agriculture" could be confirmed only by the figures characterizing the ratio of the share of collective farms, on the one hand, and individual peasant farms, on the other, in agricultural production. But due to the extremely unfavorable combination of these figures, they were not given either in Stalin's report or in Mekhlis's article; they were replaced by indicators of the decline in the role of the private sector as a whole in the national economy.

No absolute figures were given that could testify to the real economic benefit of collective farm production over individual production: they did not exist in nature, about which the author, naturally, preferred to remain silent. For the initiators and propagandists of the "revolution from above" their publication would be an admission of complete defeat. From 1928 to 1932, the gross grain harvest fell, primarily due to the forced destruction of private peasant farms, from 73.3 million tons (with planned growth targets to 105.8) to 69.9, the number of horses decreased from 32, 1 million heads to 21.7, the number of cattle - from 60.1 million heads to 38.3. In 1932, famine swept the territory with a population of

25-30 million people, of which 3 to 4 million (according to other sources - 7 million) died. At the same time, 1.8 million tons of grain were exported abroad in order to obtain foreign currency for the purchase of industrial equipment!.

Just like Stalin, Mekhlis made the main indicator of the level of development of socialism not labor productivity, not the well-being of the people, but the degree of administrative generalization (more precisely, nationalization) of production. The question of "who wins" was thus resolved by the Stalinists by transferring it from the economic and social sphere to the administrative-repressive sphere.

Mekhlis very confusedly, contradicting himself, made an attempt to reach political economic generalizations, to substantiate the advantages of expanded production under socialism. He wrote about the real possibility of increasing the provision of the population with consumer goods by 2-3 times already in the second five-year plan. Recall that he spoke about the growth in the provision of consumer goods, as a real fact, in the midst of mass famine and the heyday of the rationing system, introduced not during the war, in the days of peace! Otherwise, as extreme political cynicism,

it cannot be named.

At the same time, Lev Zakharovich is forced to admit that "still, we feel a lack of almost everything. There is a shortage of cast iron, steel, fuel, rolled metal, tractors, combine harvesters, clothing, footwear, etc." Such a recognition seems to indicate the author's ability to have a sober view and a real assessment of the situation. But in reality it turns out to be only an appearance. He reduced the explanation of the continuous deficit to the growth of the population, the scope of new construction and the increase in the consumer demand of the population (the latter is very doubtful, given the above facts). But the main reason again remained beyond the scope of reasoning. The basis of the general deficit, as well as the non-fulfillment of the five-year plan in general, was based on the same factors - the neglect of the interests of the people on the part of the country's leadership, violent methods of managing social processes, artificial spurring of growth rates when not married.

'See: Latsis O.R. Fracture. Experience in reading unclassified documents. M., 1990. S. 46; power and opposition. Russian political process of the XX century

anniversary. M., 1995. S. 154.

neither real opportunities nor available and rather limited economic resources were taken into account.

To make this fact public would mean to acknowledge the adventurism of the Great Leap Forward, which the editor-in-chief of Pravda, of course, could not do. Therefore, he quickly explained the reasons for the shortage: he transferred it from the economic to the plane of the class struggle. "As for consumer goods, here, as in all areas of socialist construction," he urged, "the resistance of the kulaks plays a significant role." In increasing class vigilance, the need to "finish off the kulak and his agents," Mekhlis saw the main condition even for increasing productivity (observance of agricultural technology, seed work, etc. he obviously considered secondary factors in this case).

It is striking that, again without deviating a single step from Stalin's instructions, Mekhlis intensively develops the provisions on the growth of the class struggle, tirelessly calls for political vigilance, and warns of sabotage by the kulaks, who are trying to "blow up the collective farms from the inside." "We are advancing towards the final liquidation of classes through an intensified class struggle, towards a socialist society through the strengthening of the dictatorship of the proletariat," he wrote. — In the Soviet Union, the class struggle takes other, modified forms, different from those existing under capitalism. But it is a mistake to think that it is dying out, that we have entered a period of a smooth course of development.

There is no need to alleviate the real difficulties that the country was going through in those years, but it is obvious that the class struggle was fanned artificially by the ruling elite, for narrowly selfish purposes, which included the elimination of political opponents, the concealment of major failures in politics and economics.

In pursuing these goals, the leadership of the party directly betrayed Marxism. The fact that Stalin had largely broken with Marxism-Leninism, that his views were a "sophistical imitation of Leninism", was also pointed out by his political opponents, in particular Martemyan Ryutin. Modern historians significantly supplement this characterization: Stalinism "disguised itself as orthodox Marxism-Leninism," as the ideology of a new

! Mekhlis L.Z. Class struggle in the second five-year plan. M., 1932. S. 10.

forces of a schematic, vulgar and dogmatic character and was tightly coupled with the pragmatic Stalinist policy, which, "depending on the circumstances, was capable of turning 180 degrees"!

Mekhlis, seeing how his spiritual mentor Stalin, proclaimed the only interpreter of Marxism-Leninism, revised this theory depending on momentary needs, not only did not object to this, but also supported this practice in every possible way. He promoted collective farms as the main form of cooperation in agriculture and welcomed the course towards forced collectivization. This was not only a direct departure from Lenin's instructions, which, by the way, Stalin referred to with or without reason, but also a direct borrowing from his worst enemy Trotsky.

Mekhlis also popularized the Stalinist thesis in every possible way about "the possibility of building a complete communist society in one country" and rudely attacked those who challenged it. Again, contrary to the theory of Marxism, he, reproducing Stalin's theses (by the way, also borrowed from Trotsky), saw "the dialectic of our development ... in the fact that we are moving towards the withering away of the state by strengthening the dictatorship of the proletariat," weakening of the dictatorship of the proletariat due to the liquidation of classes, the withering away of the state, etc." characterized as opportunistic, class hostile to the proletariat?.

Mekhlis's publications were imbued with a special concern for the victory of Stalinism on the "theoretical front". Those who did not understand that "wide-ranging socialist construction includes struggle on all (emphasized by Mekhlis. — Yu.R.) sections of the theoretical front," he declared "rotten liberals" and supporters of "above-class theory."

' See: Rehabilitation. Political processes of the 30-50s. M., 1991. S. 369; Lisichkin G Myths and reality. // Comprehend the cult of Stalin. M., 1989. S. 275-279; Makarenko V.P. bureaucracy and

Stalinism. Rostov-n/D, 1989, p. 270; Our Fatherland. The experience of political history. T. 2. M., 1991. S. 336-337.

2 Mekhlis L.Z. The Second Five-Year Plan and the Elimination of Classes. pp. 9, 12-15; his same: Class struggle in the second five-year plan. S. 8, 33.

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In his publications, Lev Zakharovich assessed the state of affairs as "alarming" in all the main areas of this "front" - in the training of ideological cadres, the development of social science, primarily in historical science, in the literary process. "In every sector of our economic and Soviet construction," he stated "the lack of ideologically strong theoretical cadres, armed with Marxist-Leninist methodology, capable of overcoming all sorts of bourgeois and petty-bourgeois theories and theories, under whatever flag they may be presented" ' .

To remedy the situation, the editor-in-chief of Pravda suggested that in the training of social scientists, the emphasis should be placed on the administrative regulation of the party and social composition of communist higher education institutions, its "working out"; in the field of historical science, to intensify the struggle on two fronts: against right-wing opportunism and for eliminating the backlog on that most important sector of the theoretical front, where we are talking about the "blood interests of Bolshevism" (meaning the questions of the dictatorship of the proletariat, the leaders the leading role of the party, etc. in their Stalinist interpretation); in the organization of the literary process - to unite writers under one administrative "roof", so that it would be easier to achieve "planning in the work of proletarian writers, linking their work with the plan of socialist construction."

With his appeals, he reflected the ever-increasing coarse, typically bureaucratic interference of the authorities in the sphere of science and culture. The latter were required to serve "practice", which in reality meant serving exclusively party propaganda.

Such efforts by Mekhlis did not go unnoticed by the top leadership of the CPSU (b). On May 5, 1937, the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks sent a greeting to the Pravda team on the occasion of its 25th birthday. It could not be perceived by Lev Zakharovich otherwise than as complete approval of his efforts: "The Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks is confident that Pravda will continue to carry the banner of Marx-Engels-Lenin high, rallying the millions of party and non-party Bolsheviks helping them and all the working people of our country to master Bolshevism, leading them

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Mekhlis L. The Institute of Red Professors and the Problem of Personnel // Party Construction, 1930, No. 2. P. 24.

along the path of a resolute struggle against the enemies of the people—for the victory of communism." In connection with this date, Mekhlis was awarded the highest state award - the Order of Lenin.

As the leader's confidence grew, the editor-in-chief of Pravda gained political weight. On September 4, 1937, the Politburo of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks decided to appoint him the head of the department of printing and publishing of the Central Committee in combination. On October 12 of the same year, at the plenum of the Central Committee, he became a member of the Central Committee. The environment in which this took place is typical. On the question of the composition of the Central Committee, Stalin spoke, saying that after the previous plenum (June 23-29 of the same 1937), 8 members of the Central Committee and 16 candidates for members of the Central Committee were exposed as enemies of the people. What is called, without comment: they "dropped out and were arrested." There were no questions or objections to Stalin's proposal to take the information into account. They unanimously voted for the exclusion of these "enemies" from the Central Committee.

To be elected instead of those who left, Stalin proposed the candidacies of those candidates for members of the Central Committee who received the largest number of votes at the 17th Congress - a total of 10 people. Then Khrushchev took the floor: "I would suggest comrades who do not go ... in order by the number of votes received, but comrades who are known to the Central Committee of the Party, are doing a very large amount of work ... Pramnek is the secretary of the Donetsk regional committee, the largest regional committee and comrade



everybody knows. Mekhlis - runs the newspaper "Pravda", a candidate member of the Central Committee (highlighted by us. - Yu.R.). Mikhailov is the secretary of the Voronezh Regional Committee of the Party, and a comrade also works at a major job. Ugarov is the second secretary of the Leningrad Regional Party Committee.

The offer was accepted. It is curious that all of this replenishment, except Mekhlis, were repressed in 1938-1939. The ominous picture of the plenum is supplemented by the fact that Yezhov was elected as a candidate member of the Politburo.

At the end of 1937, Lev Zakharovich also became a deputy of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR. Both formally and in fact, he thus entered the top political elite of the country.

! Stalin's Politburo in the 1930s. S. 158.

#### WITH "ENGINEERS OF HUMAN SOULS"

In an exceptionally curious book Through the Eyes of a Man of My Generation, Konstantin Simonov recalled how he, along with other leaders of the Union of Writers of the USSR A.A. Fadeev and B.L. Gorbатов was received by Stalin in May 1947. Among others, the question arose of the need to revise the fee policy. Under the current system of fees, Fadeev argued, the authors of good, constantly reprinted books lose out. The leader agreed that the system of remuneration of writers really needs to be adjusted, for which he proposed to create a commission. In addition to the candidates of A.A. Zhdanov, who oversaw the ideological sphere in the Politburo of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks, and Minister of Finance A.G. Zverev, another surname sounded from his lips - the Minister of State Control Mekhlis. At the same time, the writer recalled, Iosif Vissarionovich looked searchingly at his interlocutors: "Only he will immediately disperse all of you there, huh?"

Contrary to expectations, writes Simonov, the fears that really existed at the expense of Mekhlis, connected with the harshness of his character, well known to everyone, did not come true. On all royalties, he supported the proposals of the writers, and when the financiers put forward a project - starting from a certain level of annual earnings, to collect fifty-one percent of income tax from writers, Lev Zakharovich literally boiled: "We still need to think before offering such things. Do you want to levy literature as a private trade? Or are you going to consider a single writer as a handicraftsman without a motor? Are you going to fight writers like the private sector in the name of some other form of organizing literature—not writing books alone, not at your desk?" With this bilious tirade, Simonov stated with satisfaction, the Minister of State Control immediately brought down the entire tax superstructure that was proposed to be erected over literature.

We will return to the reasons for such support, which was not expected by the writers themselves. In the meantime, let's talk about the fact that this story with fees had a beginning, which only Mekhlis and Fadeev knew about from those present. And it is not by chance that the latter was worried himself and fueled this anxiety about the possibility of

the position of the Minister of State Control of his comrades in the literary workshop.

It was back in June 1936, when Mekhlis, having gathered Valentin Kataev, Nikolai Pogodin, Alexander Fadeev and other writers in his editorial office, complained that many of them, even those listed in the newspaper's assets, broke away from it. The guests denied being busy, did not want to write specifically for the newspaper, and - as an option - offered fragments of ready-made stories and novels. The open-minded Fadeev cut it straight: "Now I can live another ten years without working and exist. "Rout" is necessarily reprinted three times a year. Even if I am very lazy, I will squeeze in some articles, transcripts somewhere.

To this, the editor of Pravda coolly remarked: "The Rout should be published, but should you receive money?"!

So Fadeev and his colleagues, not without reason, feared in 1947 that the situation of the year 1936 would repeat itself. It turned out to be wrong. Why did the Minister of State Control act this way and not otherwise? Simonov gives what seems to be a very convincing explanation: "Neither to literature, nor to writers ... Mekhlis had no predilection, but he was a politician and considered literature part of the ideology, and writers were Soviet employees, and not lone handicraftsmen." And if at one time Lev Zakharovich was just beginning to develop this view, then over a decade and a half of close contact with writers — and it clearly intensified with his arrival at Pravda — the idea of literature as an important ideological weapon became a monolith.

Yes, that's right: literature is part of the ideology, and writers are workers on the ideological front, henchmen of the party. The cooperation of writers with the press, primarily Pravda, in the opinion of its editor, should have become a matter of honor for them. To write specifically for the main party newspaper, and not just to be published in it - that's what the "engineers of human souls" should have striven for. Let us remind young readers: this is exactly what Stalin called Soviet writers when he met them at A.M. Gorky on October 26, 1932.

One should pay tribute to the perseverance with which Mekhlis carried out his line. To him succeeded in cooperating

'RGVA, f. 40884, op. 1, d. 59, l. 12.

with "Pravda" on a full-time and freelance basis, many really the best writers, essayists, feuilletonists, and artists. The names of Ilya Ilf, Evgeny Petrov, Mikhail Koltsov, Anatoly Agranovsky, Boris Efimov speak for themselves.

Lev Zakharovich himself, although he wrote a lot, was deprived of a noticeable creative gift. However, before those who were gifted with much richer abilities, he did not feel piety: for him they were ordinary employees in the department of ideology, who demanded guidance.

Around 1934, at the suggestion of Gorky, the idea arose to prepare a multi-volume collection for the 20th anniversary of the October Revolution under the code name "Two Five-Year Plans". "We want to depict the growth of the masses, their cultural growth," the first proletarian writer unfolded his creative concept. "At first they made lighters, but now the devil knows how high they climbed, overcoming absolutely amazing inhuman obstacles..." He suggested "showing party work, the work of our new workers, they did it there ... to show how our peasant, a man of the 17th century, is reborn ... "

Alas, for a long time it was not possible to ignite the masters of the pen with such plots. Even Bukharin, who was supposed to be in charge of the editorial board, refused, referring to being extremely busy. Having gathered in March 1935 the members of the editorial board of the Two Five-Year Plans and stating that things were moving slowly, Gorky proposed replacing Bukharin with Mekhlis. He reasoned sensibly: the editor of Pravda, as an author, would not grab the stars from the sky, but he would make his fellow writers work. Alexei Maksimovich was not mistaken. And although, in the end, the planned 5-volume book shrank to two volumes, the publication was nevertheless carried out.

At the same meeting of the editorial board, Mekhlis enthusiastically took up Gorky's proposal to write about the new man. Who is he? Take those who live in the atmosphere of the Far East, suggested Lev Zakharovich, who survived Kolchak, the conflict of 1929 on the CER, who experience Japanese espionage attempts ... Or: "Take our peasantry. What support did tsarism have in the countryside? Priest, constable, etc. And now we have hundreds and hundreds of thousands and millions of people who will cling to Soviet power stronger than they once clung to tsarism intellectual

tion, and stronger than the old support of tsarism. He became a collective farmer, he became an organizer, he is a foreman and he will defend this system with all his fibers. But this was said about the peasantry, by that time either forcibly driven into collective farms, or dispersed in endless camps and exiles in Siberia, Kazakhstan, the Far East. It was on his example that Mekhlis planned to show the growth of the same "new man".

A separate volume (he did not see the light of day) was supposed to be devoted to "what it looks like, how a person lives in a socialist society." The editor-in-chief of Pravda dubbed him the embodiment of "scientifically based fantasy". Now leafing through the transcript of the meeting and you see how much in its participants - and among them it is easy to notice well-known, respected people - there was everything: politicking and honest work, empty schemes and scientific foresight, hypocrisy and sincerity, outright stupidity and ability to soberly assess the world around.

Inexpressively, but with great methodicalness, Lev Zakharovich outlined the problems that should have been covered in this volume: socialism built (or, in later language, real), the development of subsoil resources, the implementation of Michurin's plans for the transformation of nature, the development of the Arctic, the construction of industrial giants in Kuzbass, victory over the individual farmer. "We must show the new man... re-educated by free, emancipated labor..." he warned. "It should be agitation, deed and artistic word for communism."

Try to be stingy with "scientifically based fantasy" here, with such a formulation of the question, it is even politically dangerous. And yet not all behaved with slavish circumspection. The well-known biochemist Academician A.N. Bach could not hide his skepticism about whether it would be possible to avoid "fantasy" in covering the progress of science.

Courageous in his sobriety proved to be a certain Professor Alexandrov. Dneprostroy, Magnitostroy - that's good, he remarked, but "if you take some of our buildings, on which workers number in the tens of thousands, and look at the American buildings, on which I was, you will see that there is a dam in [20 meters builds 150 people. You will see that here the question must be raised not only in relation to fantasy, but also in relation to more

serious work." Man did not advocate for a dull, wingless existence, but against unrestrained, akin to childish, fantasizing, against the construction of castles in the air.

Did you hear his sober call? Where there! With the tacit support of Mekhlis, the architect Friedman, who spoke next, accused those present that their plans lacked just ... imagination. And simply the apotheosis of some irrational view of the world is the performance of the notorious S.G. Firin, head of the construction of the Moscow-Volga canal, and a little earlier, head of the White Sea-Baltic forced labor camp. "Tov. Stalin, who is the direct initiator of our construction, as well as the White Sea Canal..." he declared without hesitation, "about a year and a half ago, he raised a question that now seems absolutely unrealistic. This is the creation of the Moscow-Vladivostok canal. In the book "A Look at the Future" one can dream about this very beautifully..."!

Does the reader remember why the young composer was imprisoned in Tengiz Abuladze's film "Repentance"? That's right - for trying to dig a tunnel from Bombay to London. Artistic fiction, it turns out, cannot surpass the cruel reality of the 30s: it is unlikely that the canal from Belokamennaya to Vladivostok will be shorter.

But Firin goes further. He proposes to reflect the "completely new in the history of mankind" task of "involving former renegades, former enemies in any kind of work to turn them into useful workers." This is curious, Mekhlis responds, wasn't he talking about this at the beginning of the meeting? And Firin, meanwhile, is pouring like a nightingale: "What is happening now in all our correctional labor institutions is especially important to reflect in our publication in order to show this wonderful fact to the capitalist countries. On the one hand, we have fascist dungeons where the "best people" are killed (a grimace of the then reality: the executioner of his own people sheds crocodile tears for workers abroad. - Yu.R.), and, on the other hand, we have our corrective labor camps where the worst people in a significant part turn into full-fledged useful citizens of our country.

'RGVA, f. 40884, op. 1, d. 64, l. 28-29.

Firin suggested telling about it by the prisoners themselves. And what to be surprised! After all, by that time, by the way, not without the active participation of Mekhlis, the fruit of the "creative" business trip of a large group of writers to the White Sea Canal was published - without exaggeration, inspired (a bitter price for that inspiration!) from the "great construction projects of socialism". And the "reforged" themselves testified to these successes with delight.

theater of the absurd? Far from it - the Stalinist state of the mid-30s. And Mekhlis in it is no longer a simple cog. By the way, not a dreamer at all, but an extremely pragmatic politician who strictly assigns literature the role of a servant of ideology.

Even as soon as he became head of the central party newspaper, he sharply criticized the Russian Association of Proletarian Writers (RAPP), the predecessor of the Writers' Union. Referring to readers' requests, he demanded its decisive restructuring. However, in fact, behind the outwardly noble appeals to the increased demands of readers, calls for the development of self-criticism and the creation of conditions for a variety of creative movements, there was a purely pragmatic demand for "turning writers to face ... the most important problems of social construction", establishing a strict "planned work".

Based on this requirement, a mediocre but politically relevant novel by F.I. Mekhlis praised Panferov's Bars, and ridiculed one of the RAPP leaders who tried to assert that Leo Tolstoy's creative method was "the most suitable for us".

The lack of the necessary reaction to party demands, the excessively independent position of the leaders of the RAPP caused the association to quickly dissolve and create a new organization - the Union of Soviet Writers. The recognized leader of Soviet literature, Gorky, whose internal conflict with the ruling regime was growing, took the risk, preparing for the first congress of writers in 1934, to challenge the claims of Mekhlis and P.F. Yudin, then head of the department of the Central Committee of the party, for the ideological leadership of the literary

process. In a letter to Stalin, he did not restrain his harshness, apparently, the party curators finally finished baking: "Yudin and Mekhlis are people

one line. This group, having the "will to power" and relying on the central organ of the party, is, of course, capable of commanding, but, in my opinion, it does not have the right to real and necessary ideological leadership of literature, it does not, due to the weak intellectual strength of this group, and also due to its extreme illiteracy in relation to the past and present of literature".

The writer's voice was not heard, he was not even honored with an answer. But this story still had a continuation. The following year, in 1935, Gorky from the pages of Pravda was subjected to false accusations of the writer Panferov. Through the lips of the latter, Alexei Maksimovich was given to understand: he does not belong to the untouchables. Gorky tried to give an answer through the same Pravda, but Mekhlis refused the classics of socialist realism. He was vindictive and had plenty of opportunities to take revenge.

Lev Zakharovich wove his voice into the campaign against formalism and naturalism in Soviet art launched in 1936-1938. On January 28, 1936, it was opened by Pravdinskaya editorial article "Muddle instead of music". In it, under the pretext of overcoming the formalist vacillations and rough naturalism that supposedly distinguished D.D. Shostakovich "Katerina Izmailova", in fact, contained a call to put an end to the aesthetic principles of the first post-revolutionary years, when bold searches, various trends were allowed in art, and, as in literature, to establish the dominance of ideological dogmatism (under the pseudonym "socialist realism").

Later, increasing the momentum of the ideological campaign, Pravda published devastating articles concerning yet another opera by Shostakovich, The Bright Stream, a play by M.A. Bulgakov "Molière.

The Cabal of Saints", opera-farce "Bogatyrs" based on the libretto by D. Bedny.

The personal participation of Mekhlis in the massacre of the last of these works is especially characteristic, since it clearly reveals the methods and techniques that Lev Zakharovich resorted to when participating in pogrom ideological campaigns. When the poetry of Demyan Bedny was considered to be working for the revolution, the editor-in-chief of Pravda supported him. At a meeting of the editorial board in August 1935, he directly demanded that his subordinates involve the poet in cooperation: "Demyan Bedny complains very much all the time. This

(feuilletons. - Yu.R.) his element, but they sabotage him - they don't send him material. For some time, the fables of this author constantly appeared on the pages of the newspaper.

It was in Pravda on October 24, 1936, that Bedny's self-report, sustained in laudatory tones, about his work on the opera-farce The Bogatyrs, which premiered the next day, was published. There seemed to be no sign of a thunderstorm. Benevolence, however, betrayed Mekhlis as soon as the head of the government, Molotov, visited the performance. He expressed extreme indignation at the performance, after which the Politburo issued a decision to ban it. Literally the next morning, on November 15, Pravda published a devastating article about the opera, and the next day, information about a pogrom meeting held at the Chamber Theater of A.Ya. Tairov, where the performance was staged.

Mekhlis personally edited this information in the direction of tightening. Instead of a conciliatory phrase: "Tairov expressed his conviction that with his further work the Chamber Theater will be able to correct this mistake," he entered the exact opposite in meaning: "This means that A. Tairov did not understand the decision of the committee (for arts. - Yu. R.) and does not draw all the necessary conclusions from it. After that, one of the favorite theses of the editor-in-chief of Pravda in conversations on literary topics was a sharp objection to the "dressing up" of Soviet POETRY.

Expelled from the Union of Writers and from the party, Demyan Bedny tried with all his might to rehabilitate himself and from time to time sent his opuses to Pravda. In December 1937, the editor-in-chief sent one of the fables to Stalin, asking for his opinion. The answer of the leader read: "Comrade. Mekhlis! I am responding to your request about Demyan's fable "Fight or Die" with a letter addressed to Demyan, which you can read to him.

To the newly appeared Dante, i.e. Konrad, that is to say ... Demyan Poor.

The fable or poem "Fight or Die", in my opinion, is an artistically mediocre thing. As a critique of fascism, it is pale and unoriginal. As a critic of the Soviet system (don't kid!), she

Maksimenkov L.V. Muddle instead of music. Stalin's cultural revolution 1936-1938. M., 1997. S. 222.

stupid, yet transparent. Since we (the Soviet people) have a lot of literary rubbish anyway, it is hardly worth multiplying this kind of literature with one more fable, so to speak ... , of course, I understand that I am obliged to apologize to Demyan-Dante for the forced

bloodliness. With respect, I. Stalin."

What to add to this?

well well

Where there is a "big" leader, one cannot do without "small" leaders. Having become one of the politicians closest to Stalin, Mekhlis received the right to an increased share of public attention. When in October 1937 he was nominated in the Kuntsevsky constituency of Moscow as a candidate for deputies of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, the press,

beginning with the district "Bolshevik" and ending with "Pravda", she sang praises to "our candidate". For all 7 years of work in Pravda, wrote the above-mentioned party functionary Pospelov, Mekhlis did not have a single day off. When he fell ill in 1933, he ended up in the hospital "right from behind the editorial table." And as soon as he regained consciousness, despite the protests of the doctors, he immediately took up editorial affairs.

And here is an article by Mikhail Koltsov from Rabochaya Moskva, December 4, 1937. A prominent journalist will obviously be changed in taste and sense of proportion. Only soulless clichés replace each other, not a single living word can be found in the article: a tireless, militant Marxist, a thoughtful party worker, a solid Bolshevik, etc. and so on.

Aleksey Surkov's verses also lay down on all the patient paper:

The country is approaching a historical date, As a bright festive milestone. About Mekhlis, our own candidate, I will say a word from the bottom of my heart...

Following the venerable "engineers of human souls", ordinary voters also spoke out. N. Shubin, employee of the sanatorium

"Barvikha", a former technical worker of the Central Committee apparatus: "At 11 o'clock, at 3-4 o'clock in the morning, we could almost always see him busy. Lev Zakharovich does not protect his health, but cares about people according to Stalinist."

The former weaver of the Red Rose, A. Gracheva, expressed her admiration for the zeal of the editor-in-chief of Pravda for the working man. The plot of her story is simple: a movement of multi-station workers was unfolding at the factory. They switched to the new system in a disorganized manner. Gracheva wrote a note about this. After the publication, the worker was summoned by the people's commissar (later exposed as an "enemy of the people") and scolded her. Then Gracheva went to Pravda. It was accepted by the editor-in-chief, and again the publication. "I will never forget the great help that Lev Zakharovich Mekhlis gave me at a difficult moment in my life. He was not afraid to criticize the People's Commissar for me, a worker."

Blessed is he who could believe in the noble motives of this man's deeds...

The years of work of Mekhlis in Pravda noticeably increased and strengthened his position in the nomenklatura. This became possible due to his absolute support for the measures taken by the General Secretary of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks and his inner circle, pursuing a policy of "great leap forward" in the economy, artificially inciting class struggle in the country, intimidating and physically destroying the opposition, teaching writers, poets, composers, how to compose "correct" books and operas. Lev Zakharovich became one of the country's main propagandists of the course chosen by the Stalinist leadership of the party. His energy, initiative and perseverance in the implementation of the Stalinist course, the opponents of the leader could only envy.

The process of his approval as a public politician of an all-party scale was completed. To the previously obtained opportunities for an apparatchik to influence politics gradually, using mainly informal connections with party leaders, Mekhlis added powers arising from his high official position and membership in the Central Committee of the party.

#### Chapter 4

### AT THE PEAK OF THE "GREAT TERROR"

#### "DESTROY LIKE BAD DOGS"

At the very end of 1937, by the will of the leader, the fate of our hero again made a somersault. On December 31, 1920, Mekhlis was transferred from the Red Army to the reserve. Exactly 17 years later, on December 30, 1937, the Politburo of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks, by its decision, returned him to the Armed Forces, approving him as the head of the Political Directorate of the Red Army and Deputy Commissar of Defense of the USSR. At the same time, he was awarded the rank of army commissar of the 2nd rank.

Such an appointment logically fit into the mainstream of Stalin's personnel policy. The PU of the Red Army, exercising leadership of all party-political work in the army, was the most important lever of influence of the party elite on the minds of a huge layer of Soviet people - military personnel, members of their families, civilians. And here a lot depended on the leadership of the Political Department, the degree of its involvement with a particular political figure. In this regard, the previous heads of the PU Ya.B. Gamarnik and P.A. Smirnov, as their tragic fate showed, Stalin was dissatisfied.

What made the leader to elevate to the post, in the conditions of that time, the second most important in the Armed Forces, namely Mekhlis, a purely civilian man who wore a military uniform only a couple of years at the front, and even then two decades ago? The point was Stalin's desire to give a new breath to the identification and uprooting from the army of everyone who somehow disagreed with him. At the same time, the absence of strong ties with the army leadership from his former assistant was a positive quality: when he started to purge the army, the leader did not trust the professional military.

Being an integral part of the general process of the "great terror", repressions against military personnel had a certain specificity. They took place among the armed masses of people organized according to the regulations; were carried out in conditions of "dual power", that is, in the presence, in addition to commanders, of the institution of military commissars, invested with unprecedented power; were sent before

in general, against the cadres of the commanding and political staff; their background was a German fake about the betrayal of the highest command staff of the Red Army, consecrated by the guilty verdict of the court in the case of the "military-fascist conspiracy".

In addition, mass repressions in the Armed Forces unfolded somewhat later than in most other state structures. At the same time, the scale and intensity of exposing the "enemies of the people" in the system of the army and navy in 1937 were recognized by Stalin.  
inadequate.

The epidemic of arrests in the Red Army in 1938 even surpassed the year 1937 in scope. As of January 1, 1938, the staff of the highest command staff of the Red Army (from the brigade commander and above. - Yu.R.) included 845 people, the top political staff (from the brigade commissar and above) - 269 people. Not all of them had a chance to live until the end of the year. People continued to be seized in batches. Two Marshals of the Soviet Union, two commanders of the 1st rank, one (the only one at that time) flagship of the fleet of the 1st rank, one (again, the only) army commissar of the 1st rank, the last two commanders of the 2nd rank produced in 1935, 20 commanders, three flagships of the 1st rank, 13 corps commissars, 49 division commanders, 36 divisional commissars, 97 brigade commanders, 96 colonels!.

Of course, the Soviet leader could not but understand that such repressions utterly weaken the army, reduce its combat effectiveness. But he scorned this danger, considering it much more important to eliminate all those who caused even the slightest doubt, and to bend the rest, to crush them with fear, which, better than any means, guaranteed loyalty to him. At the same time, when the bloodletting of the Armed Forces reached an unprecedented scale, and more and more people were asking questions whether it was possible to continue the repressions without the threat of the army completely losing its combat capability, Stalin at the "helm" of the political agencies needed an absolutely loyal person. .

Mekhlis was like that. Many years of experience told him that, having entered the circle of the elect, he would have to walk over corpses. In the literal sense of the word. The new head of the Red Army PD knew perfectly well that such was the internal logic worked out by Stalin

' Souvenirs O.F. The tragedy of the Red Army 1937-1938. M., 1998. S. 80.

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system, and everyone belonging to it, as in any criminal community, was tied with blood. This did not bother him, he was ready to follow this logic, he performed his inquisitorial work without a shadow of a doubt in the rightness and with enthusiasm. "We will destroy enemies and traitors like mad dogs," these words, thrown by him from the rostrum of the XVIII Party Congress, were not a good metaphor for him, but once and for all a definite line in relation to those who were or were considered the enemy of the owner, which means automatically and his opponent.

The dialectic of that exceptionally difficult time consisted in the fact that mass repressions had a detrimental effect on literally all aspects of the life of the Armed Forces. Under their yoke, the troops studied and fought. The atmosphere of spy mania and the fight against "enemies of the people" demoralized the people and undermined the military collectives. At the same time, the army school, which millions of Soviet people went through, along with admiration for the leader and hatred for the "enemies of the people", brought up love for the Motherland, a readiness to defend it with arms in hand. Having managed to resist the destructive influence of the repressive policy of the authorities, the soldiers of the Red Army in a few years demonstrated unprecedented patriotism on the battlefields of the Great Patriotic War. However, no patriotic impulse, of course, could compensate for the terrible lack of trained military personnel that fell during the years of repression, as a result, the country and the army went to war with Nazi Germany.

unprepared.

The appointment of Mekhlis to one of the key posts in the Red Army was prepared in advance. As early as November 15, 1937, the plenum of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks raised his political status by transferring him from candidates to members of the Central Committee. His military-administrative status also increased: unlike his predecessor Smirnov, he simultaneously received the post of deputy people's commissar of defense. And on March 13 of the same 1938, he joined the newly formed Main Military Council of the Red Army - a narrow collegium of only nine people, together with Stalin, Voroshilov and several deputies of the people's commissar. All this clearly testified to the desire of the leaders of the party and the state to increase the role of this link in the military-political hierarchy in the processes of "Bolshevization", or rather, the Stalinization of Krasnoyarsk.

Noah Army.

Unlike domestic political forces, Stalin's foreign opponents did not have to be cunning and express immoderate enthusiasm about the appointment of a new head of the Red Army PD. They were able to comprehend its true meaning immediately. Trotsky commented on it with great sarcasm: "By appointing his horse to senators, Caligula wanted to humiliate the Roman Senate. By appointing his lackey Mekhlis to the leadership of the Red Army, Stalin pursues much less platonic goals. A former personal secretary of Stalin, an incompetent careerist, a specialist in behind-the-scenes intrigue, a performer of the most dirty deeds of the owner, Mekhlis is strong only by supporting Stalin. Mehliis - Deputy People's Commissar of the Military! Who would have believed this six months ago? The more "enemies of the people" Stalin exterminates, rising up on their corpses, the greater the void is formed around him. The reserves of the faithful are limited today by subjects like Mekhlis!

In a similar spirit, the author of the magazine "Sentry" published in Paris spoke out. He characterized Mekhlis as a person who secured his post by the fact that he was not connected by any friendly ties with the former leadership of the Red Army, as a diligent executor of Stalin's plans in the fight against the "rebellious army".

The sinister zeal in the bloody purge of the commanding and political staff of Mekhlis, in fact, was not to be occupied. We have already drawn attention to the fact that with his coming to the leadership of the PU, the previous efforts to expose the "enemies of the people" were recognized as insufficiently active. He tried to put such a conclusion - and successfully - into the decisions of the All-Army Conference of Political Workers, held in April 1938. In the letter of the Main Military Council of the Red Army adopted at this meeting and approved by the Central Committee of the Party, it was stated that "tangible results" in "cleansing the army from enemies of the people", which was the focus of the February-March 1937 and January 1938 plenums of the Central Committee The CPSU(b), despite the existence of the institution of military commissars for a year,



has not been achieved so far. The authors of such biting conclusions - and they were Mekhlis as the main speaker and, as he publicly stated here

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Cit. Quoted from: Rogovin V.Z. The party of the executed. P. 178. 2 RGVA, f. 9, op. 40, d. 53, l. 68.

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However, in front of the participants in the meeting, Stalin - they themselves evaluated their "achievements", they themselves determined new frontiers.

At the same time, they were not embarrassed that arrests and dismissals from the army in the previous period had already formed a gaping personnel hole. In 1937, the number of arrested only army political workers reached 876 people, and in the first months of 1938 - another 250. In total, the shortage of political personnel on January 1, 1938 amounted to 10,525 people, or almost 30 percent of the staff numbers.

Encouraged by confidence, Mekhlis immediately set about cleaning out the apparatus of the PU and the political staff in the main and central departments of the People's Commissariat of Defense, in military districts, in military educational institutions, for the selection and placement of "his" personnel. The task - to physically eliminate every single one of the "spies and saboteurs" - was the main, understandable, familiar one.

Among the first documents that he signed in his new position was the directive dated January 14, 1938 on the members of the so-called Belarusian-Tolmachev group. Prior to that, it was called differently - "the inner-party opposition of 1928". Such a political label was the then head of the PU A.S. Bubnov glued parts of the political staff of the Belarusian Military District and the Communists of the Military-Political Academy. N.G. Tolmachev for an attempt to propose measures to expand democratic principles in military development.

So, a decade later, Mekhlis ordered the heads of political departments of districts, fleets, armies, military commissars and heads of political departments of formations, military academies and schools to identify all members of this "group" and make an appropriate entry in their communist registration cards. A certificate of this must be submitted to the department of leading party bodies (ORPO) of the Political Directorate of the Red Army.

Not a single oppositionist was supposed to slip out of the networks, even if he had already retired from the reserve. Lev Zakharovich carefully followed how his instructions were carried out. A month later, he sent a formidable telegram to the same officials: "It turns out that many senior officials are not familiar with the directive of the RKKA PU of January 14 ... I consider this abnormal and I oblige you to acquaint all communists of the Red Army with this directive" .

"Tolmachevtsy" became his personal enemies. He made a real hunt for them. In July 1938, while in the Far East, he sent the following cipher to Moscow to his deputy: "Appoint a commission to examine and study the teaching staff of the Lenin Academy. If members of the Tolmachev group have survived, withdraw up to the latter."

The tentacles of this all-pervading octopus grabbed people and then, for several decades. In 1962, a group of former political workers, graduates of the Military-Political Academy, and by that time already pensioners, appealed to the Main Political Directorate of the SA and the Navy with a request to exclude from their registration cards of members of the CPSU an entry on participation in the Belarusian-Tolmachev group, in a legal manner. calling this fabrication "the result of the domination of the personality cult" and the arbitrariness of Mekhlis. In this regard, they proposed to conduct a party investigation into the activities of the former head of the PU of the Red Army and publish the true history of the "group".

The veterans believed that parting with the past, proclaimed at the 20th and 22nd Party Congresses, could really take place. The party elite, however, thought differently. Considering a priori the resolutions of the Central Committee of 1929, which qualified the Byelorussian-Tolmachev group as

the intra-party opposition, the faithful, the head of the GlavPU, General of the Army A.A. Epishev, in his report to the Central Committee of the KISS, did not see any grounds for removing the corresponding entry from the registration cards. "There is also no reason to conduct a party investigation into the guilt of the former head of the PUR, Mekhlis, in connection with this issue," Epishev concluded.

Justice triumphed, however, for the vast majority of "oppositionists", alas, posthumously, only after another thirty years. Only in May 1990, the commission of the Politburo of the Central Committee for additional study of materials related to the repressions of the 30-50s, recognized the Belarusian-Tolmachev group as a gross fabrication of the closest Stalinist entourage.

But the "Tolmachevites" were by no means the only opponent for Mekhlis. In this case, everything would be too simple. No, the fantasy of blood-drunk inquisitors extended much

APRF, f. 3, op. 50, d. 26, l. 176.

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go further. "The peculiarities of the work of saboteurs in the Red Army were reflected in the fact," said the head of the PD at the All-Army Conference of political workers, "that many different, isolated spy groups were operating here. They acted according to the principle - "to go apart, to beat together." Each group held a stone in its bosom against the other. But they all had one thing in common - hatred for our Bolshevik Party, for the working class and for the cause of socialism!

The speaker enthusiastically developed his idea. Shot by this time M.N. Tukhachevsky (former First Deputy Commissar of Defense) and I.P. Uborevich (the former commander of the Belorussian military district) he called those who were in the service of German intelligence and ranked him among the "spies branch of wreckers" associated with the so-called All-Military Union, a White Guard émigré organization. Ya.B., who committed suicide Gamarnik (former head of the PU of the Red Army) and the executed I.E. Yakir (the former commander of the Urals Military District) was characterized as "cadre, seasoned Trotskyists who sold themselves to Japanese intelligence." S.P. Uritsky (former head of the Intelligence Directorate of the General Staff), according to him, is "a full-time French spy, with a long record of treacherous work", I.P. Belov (former commander of the Belarusian Military District, he replaced Uborevich) - "Old Social Revolutionary", A.S. Bulin (former deputy head of the PU of the Red Army) is an "old Uganovite". Quite a few turned out to be in the Red Army, the speaker whipped up passions, of all sorts of Menshevik and bourgeois-nationalist groupings. In the PU of the Red Army sat "right-wing Trotskyist spies."

It's amazing how Lev Zakharovich, and even his boss, didn't get confused by all the nuances of the views of their opponents (one "right-wing "leftist" deviation" is worth something!). However, this did not bother them. It seems that the first labels that came across were hung, and the more biting and absurd they sounded, the better.

It was possible to expose the enemies much earlier, Mekhlis said, but quite a few "bog elements and conciliators" settled in the PU, therefore, "the whole burden of the work" fell on the shoulders of the Chekists. Conciliators are good when, by his own admission, by that time more than 1,100 political workers had already been arrested, that is, about

! APRF, f. 3, op. 50, d. 22, l. 13606.

5 percent of the entire political staff! "The figure is not as significant as individual alarmists like to draw," the speaker demonstrated enviable composure.

Paying tribute to the Chekists, he was not going to stand aside himself. The purge began with the apparatus of the Political Administration. At the same time, he considered the personnel department to be the most neglected. For less than 10 days, the head of this department, Brigadier Commissar M.R. Kravchenko. And a month later he was arrested. It turned out, according to Mekhlis, to be a "bulin club",

"Participant in the conspiracy", transferred by the former deputy head of the PU Bulin from Belarus in order to promote the "Tolmachevites" to the leadership. The secretary of the Proletarian District Party Committee of Moscow, F.F., was appointed head of the personnel department. Kuznetsov, who by the end of the year had become the deputy of the Mekhlis.

The next victim of the campaign against the enemies of the people in the Political Directorate of the Red Army was the secretary of the party organization N.Ya. Kotov. He was also removed from his post in the very first days of the work of the new head of the PU, charged with the fact that he concealed materials that incriminated Bulin in right-wing Trotskyist speeches in 1928.

A crushing blow was dealt to the political departments of the military districts. In the Transcaucasian Military District, the former head of the PU, Brigadier Commissar K.G. Razdolsky, according to Mekhlis, "in the order of ostentatious vigilance" dismissed over 700 people, and in fact "turned out" to be a member of the Belarusian-Tolmachev group, an associate of Gamarnik, Yakir. On the initiative of the head of the PU of the Red Army, he was removed from his post, dismissed from the army, and arrested. In the Siberian military district, "hardened spies" were repressed — the head of the political department of the district, battalion commissar I.D. Pavlov, member of the military council, divisional commissar N.A. Jung, in the Trans-Baikal Military District - Deputy Head of the Political Directorate of the District, Divisional Commissar G.F. Nevraev, military commissar of the Special Corps in the MPR, corps commissar A.P. Prokofiev. In the Volga Military District, Brigadier Commissar N.D. Che remin. Mekhlis also argued that the situation in the Belarusian, North Caucasian, Central Asian and other regions was not the best.

districts.

Truly a household name was the name of the head of the PU of the Kyiv military district, divisional commissar I.M. Gornostaev. It was inclined in different but equally negative ways by the participants of the All-Army Conference of Political Workers; it was voiced in the letter of the Main Military Council adopted at this meeting. Gornostaev was characterized as an active participant in the military fascist conspiracy, who carried out subversive work and disorganized the political apparatus. The finale was usual for those days - dismissal from the army, arrest, execution.

The political workers of the KOVO were not guaranteed against serious troubles in the future either. On January 11, 1939, the commander of the troops of the district S.K. Timoshenko sent the following telegram to Mekhlis: "Deputy head of the special department of the KOVO Shevchenko reported to the military council - the testimony of Shifres, the former head of the academy (Military Economic Academy of the Red Army. - Yu.R.), Polyakov in 1934-1935. actively participated in the Trotskyist group headed by Slavin. Arrested former instructors Puokra Boyko, Solovyov and Volkov ... confirm their testimony that Polyakov harbored and supported the former Tolmachevites"? We are talking here about the former member of the Military Council of the KOVO, and later the commissar of the Military Economic Academy, divisional commissar M.N. Polyakov, who was a member of the Military Council under the People's Commissar of Defense. On him, already released by this time from all posts, apparently, compromising evidence was collected in order to give the appearance of grounds to the subsequent arrest.

Not only historians place personal responsibility for the pogrom of personnel on Mekhlis. As established by the KGB and the General Prosecutor's Office of the USSR, he took an active part in resolving the issues of the arrests of prominent military workers. He acted together with other "personnel officers" - the head of the department of the People's Commissariat of Defense for the command personnel E.A. Shchadenko and the head of the department of leading party bodies of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks G.M. Malenkov. In the course of the rehabilitation of a number of military figures who were under the process of a "military-fascist conspiracy", the NKVD's submissions addressed to People's Commissar Voroshilov about the arrest of a member of the NKVD were revealed.

'RGVA, f. 9, op. 40, d. 53, l. 6806. 2 RGVA, Ff. 9, op. 29, d. 348, l. 150.

new military councils of a number of military districts - N.A. Jung, K.G. Sidorova, A.V. Tarutinsky, senior inspector of the Political Directorate of the Red Army Ya.G. Indrikson, Deputy Head of the PU of the North Caucasian Military District A.M. Bitte and others. On these documents there are resolutions of the aforementioned trinity expressing their agreement with the arrest.

Seeking another victim, the gaze of Mehlis penetrated everywhere. Resorting to the capabilities of the Special Department of the GUGB of the NKVD of the USSR, he constantly "sifted through" the wrong category of political workers. So, on May 23, 1938, he asked to check politically the candidates for deputies of the Supreme Soviets of the Union republics nominated by the military councils and political departments of the districts, on June 11 of the same year - a group of political workers in connection with his appointment to the Red Army PU.

One of the categories of persons subject to total checks and purges were representatives of nationalities that had state formations outside the USSR. On March 10, 1938, Malenkov instructed Mehlis to prepare lists of army communists - Poles, Germans, Latvians, Estonians, Finns, Lithuanians, Bulgarians, Greeks, Koreans and others. The instruction was carried out, and in June of the same year, People's Commissar of Defense Voroshilov signed a directive on the dismissal from the Red Army of commanders and political workers of these nationalities and natives of foreign countries, a priori suspected of being able to betray socialist principles, even if they gave them away.

protection for life.

The dismissal of the senior command staff of the Red Army was outside the competence of the Mekhlis, issues of this kind were resolved by the Politburo of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks and the People's Commissar of Defense. But the head of the RKKA PU found an opportunity to influence the situation: the archives contain a large number of his reports addressed to Stalin and other leaders, casting doubt on the political reliability of many commanders.

So, on March 21, 1938, he reported without evidence to Stalin, Yezhov and Voroshilov that "aviation was the least cleared of enemy forces," and asked to remove the deputy head of the Air Force, Ya.V. Smushkevich and two members of the military council - the Air Force of the Red Army and the AON (Special Purpose Army) from their positions, and their case should be transferred to the NKVD. Then Smushkevich managed to ward off the slanders, but in the spring of 1941 he was nevertheless arrested and in October of the same year he was shot without trial.

But the Intelligence Directorate of the General Staff could not resist the slander and was subjected to a catastrophic defeat. During 1937-1938, 182 people were arrested there. The head of the political department of this department, I.I. Ilyichev reported to the head of the Red Army PU: "You know that, in essence, we have no intelligence ... There are no military attaches in America, Japan, England, France, Italy, Czechoslovakia, Germany, Finland, Iran, Turkey, those. in almost all major countries! On the addressee, this report did not produce any

impression.

On November 20, 1938, Mekhlis, not being afraid to come into conflict with the People's Commissar of Defense Voroshilov, by the way, a member of the Politburo, sent a letter to Stalin over his head: "In two notes, I reported to the Central Committee of the CPSU (b) and the Commissar about the situation in Intelligence. There sits a group of dubious people and spies. I allowed the head of the political department of the Intelligence Department to sort out the case of Kolosov (meaning P.I. Kolosov. - Yu.R.), the former secretary of the party bureau, who was connected with the enemies, who led them out from under fire ... Now comrade. Voroshilov ordered the meeting to be canceled and the issue not to be considered. The People's Commissar wants to liquidate the political department, which cannot be done. It is also necessary to introduce a commissioner.

I do not agree with the line of the people's commissar on this issue. It is also wrong that the meeting is canceled over the head of the head of the Political Administration of the Red Army ... In general, it is time for me to answer at least for something in the People's Commissariat. I am ready to take responsibility for my work. But I cannot put up with the fact that there are quite a few enemies around (not only in the Intelligence Agency, but in the central administrations), and I am in the role of an observer.

Please call me and give me a line. I reported to the People's Commissar that I was referring the question to the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks.

In a word, arrests in the military intelligence agencies continued. And this - we recall - on the eve of World War III! In the paroxysm of spy mania, in the desire to curry favor with Stalin at any cost, his former assistant, as we see, agreed to the fact that none other than the People's Commissar of Defense would bind his hands. And in general,

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Cit. Quoted from: Suvenirov O.F. The Red Army on the eve ... Essays on the history of the political education of the personnel of the Red Army in 1929 - June 1941. M., 1993. S. 202.

2 APRF, f. 3, op. 50, d. 22, l. 205.

the move with the letter could pursue far-reaching calculations: to show oneself in the eyes of the leader from a favorable side, and the people's commissar, with whom Lev Zakharovich never had warm relations, once again stung.

The hand of Mekhlis belongs to a mass of denunciations concerning individual military leaders, including those who during the years of the Great Patriotic War grew into major military leaders.

Marshal of the Soviet Union GK. Zhukov.

The marshal drew the attention of Khrushchev and Mikoyan to Mekhlis's attempts to discredit him in a letter dated February 27, 1964: "In 1937-1938, they tried to defame me and stick the label of an enemy of the people. And, as I knew, the former member of the Military Council of the Belarusian Military District F.I. Golikov (now a marshal) and the head[of] PURK KA Mekhlis, who carried out a purge of the command and political staff of the Belarusian Military District.

Marshal of the Soviet Union I.S. Konev.

A denunciation against him, then the commander and military commissar of the 37th Infantry Division, was received by the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks in December 1937. On this occasion, the head of the PU of the Red Army, Smirnov, informed the Central Committee that Konev was not in doubt, he was working well. In March 1938, Mekhlis requested this letter from the archive in order to use it to compromise Smirnov. They also engaged in a new check of Konev on the grounds that he was covered by an "enemy of the people." In December of the same year, Mekhlis informed the Central Committee: "According to available information, Konev (by this time already the commander of the 2nd Separate Red Banner Army. - Yu.R.) hides his kulak origin, one of his uncles was a policeman."

Marshal of the Soviet Union V.K. Blucher.

Literally immediately upon arrival at the headquarters of the Red Banner Far Eastern Front, which Blucher commanded from July 1, 1938, Mekhlis and the Deputy People's Commissar of Internal Affairs M.P. Frinovsky entered into a sharp conflict with the commander. With the active participation of the head of the PU of the Red Army, it was fabricated

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Georgy Zhukov. Transcript of the October (1957) plenum of the Central Committee of the CPSU and other documents. M., 2001. S. 496 2 RGVA, f. 9, op. 29, d. 354, l. 265; 405, l. 7.

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Blucher's "case" was considered, which was considered by the Main Military Council of the Red Army on August 31, 1938.

The marshal, obviously, had been eyeing for a long time. His loyalty to the leader was tested by introducing Ya.I. Alksnis, Chief of the General Staff of the Red Army B.M. Shaposhnikov, commanders of the Moscow, Belorussian, Leningrad and North Caucasian military districts S.M. Budyonny, I.P. Belov, P.E. Dybenko, N.D. Kashirin to the Special Judicial Presence, which considered the case of the "military-fascist conspiracy" of Tukhachevsky and others. Truly, there were no limits to Stalin's cynicism: first, to force military leaders to participate in the trial of comrades-in-arms, and then to destroy them as well.

themselves, accusing them of participating in the same conspiracy (of the members of the Special Presence, only Shaposhnikov and Budyonny survived).

Probably, for the sake of fairness, it should be noted that Vasily Konstantinovich acted unsuccessfully on Khasan. According to Marshal Konev, "in any case, Blucher failed such a small operation as the Hassan events." However, the claims that were presented to him at a meeting of the Main Military Council were, first of all, not of a military, but of a political nature. The commander of the Far Eastern Front was accused of "deliberate defeatism", inability or unwillingness to "really realize the cleansing of the front from the enemies of the people", "duplicity, lack of discipline and sabotage of the armed rebuff to the Japanese troops". Following the meeting of the Central Armed Forces of the Red Army, Blucher was removed from the post of commander! He had a little more than a month and a half before his arrest, and another 18 days before death in prison as a result of wild torture.

Army General A.V. Khrulev.

"At the end of 1937," he recalled, "Mekhlis assured Stalin that I was an enemy, a participant in a military fascist conspiracy. Shchadenko tried to object, but rather timidly, and then, under the influence of Mekhlis, he himself began to doubt. In 1938 I was close to being arrested." Later, the head of the PU himself said with displeasure that only intercessors

Russian archive: Great Patriotic War. Orders of the People's Commissar of Defense of the USSR. T. 13 (2-1). M., 1994. S. 60.

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The quality of Stalin and Voroshilov, who had known Khrulev since the civil war, saved him major troubles.

Lieutenant General M.F. Lukin.

In 1937, for "blunting" class vigilance, he was removed from the post of military commandant of Moscow and sent as deputy chief of staff of the Siberian Military District. While in Novosibirsk on his way to the Far East, on July 27, 1938, Mekhlis telegraphed Shchadenko and Kuznetsov: "Chief of Staff Lukin is an extremely dubious person who got mixed up with enemies, connected with Yakir. Brigade commander Fedorov (then head of the Special Department of the GUGB of the NKVD of the USSR. - Yu.R.) should have enough materials about him ... You won't be mistaken if you remove Lukin immediately"? The future Hero of the Soviet Union, commander of the army, summoned to the Commission of Party Control, was saved only by the intervention of Voroshilov (by the way, a rare case for the people's commissar of defense).

Also found were denunciations, signed by Mekhlis, against the head of the Intelligence Directorate of the Red Army, Divisional Commander A.G. Orlov (December 17, 1938), member of the Military Council of the Red Army Air Force V.G. Koltsov (03.03.1938), commanders of the Ural Military District G.P. Sofronov (19.04.1938) and Siberian Military District M.A. Antonyuk (05/22/1938), Deputy Commander of the Moscow Military District L.G. Petrovsky (26.05.1938), division commander M.A. Reiter (21.12.1938), I.T. Korovnikov (December 21, 1938) and others. Most of them, unfortunately, failed to prove their innocence, and they fell victims of repression.

Mekhlis was quite independent. He could, as we saw above, turn to Stalin over the head of his immediate superior, People's Commissar Voroshilov, and he was not at all afraid to spoil relations with other leading workers.

The commander of the special cavalry regiment of the People's Commissariat of Defense, brigade commander K.G., enjoyed the trust of Marshal Budyonny. Kalmykov. Member of the Military Council of the Moscow Military District, Divisional Commissar A.I. The Zaporozhian tried in every possible way to remove Kalmykov, who was suspected of having links with "enemies of the people", even informing

Khrulev A.V. Test by war // Logistics of the Armed Forces, 1991, No. 11. P. 29; See also: New and Contemporary History, 1995, No. 2, pp. 68-69.

? See: Volkogonov D.A. Triumph and tragedy. Political portrait of I.V. Stalin. In 2 books. Ed. 2nd, add. Book. 1. M. 1990. S. 544.

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the shaft of the secretary of the Central Committee A.A. Andreev about the need to dismiss the regiment commander from the army. But the commander of the Budyonny district intervened, taking the subordinate under protection. Not having achieved what he wanted, Zaporozhets reported to the head of the Red Army PU. He sent a whole report on the situation in the special cavalry regiment and its commander addressed to Stalin and Voroshilov, as chairman of the Main Military Council! Kalmykov "does not deserve political trust," it said, but he enjoys the support of Marshal Budyonny.

Lev Zakharovich, insisting on the removal of the brigade commander from his post, in fact, at the same time raised the question of the political immaturity, if not worse, of his high patron. Thus, he made it clear: in the fight against the enemies of the people, there are no compromises for him, no incidental circumstances, such as considerations of subordination or friendly relations. Such impulses sent to Stalin were received very favorably, for which there is much evidence. And the main one is that Mekhlis was allowed to rage until September 1940, when even the failed Voroshilov was already removed from the post of people's commissar.

The behavior of the chief of the PU of the Red Army highlighted his moral inferiority, a tendency to hypocrisy and intrigue. Having dealt with dozens and hundreds of Communist leaders truly devoted to the state and the people, he, without a shadow of the slightest embarrassment, declared from the rostrum of the 18th Congress of the CPSU (b): "It's time for all of us, army Bolsheviks, to treat the fate of a party member, not to allow a person to be expelled on the basis of whispers in the back streets, but to act only on the basis of documents and facts."

The reprisals against specific people were accompanied by massive brainwashing. In accordance with the directive of May 26, 1938, a special course was introduced into the curricula of military and military-political schools, courses, military academies, divisional party and Komsomol schools, district houses of party education - version and terrorist activities of the intelligence services of the capitalist countries and their Trotskyist-Bukharin agents". And each

RGVA, f. 9, op. 29, d. 351, l. 429-434. ? Mekhlis L.Z. Speech at the 18th Congress of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks on March 14, 1939. M., 1939.

The trial of this very "agency" was preceded and accompanied by a noisy propaganda campaign in the army press, which was followed by numerous instructions from the head of the RKKA PU.

Only towards the end of 1938 did the narcotic intoxication of repression seem to let the inquisitors go: the first signs of a change in repressive policy appeared at the national level. The secret resolution of the Council of People's Commissars and the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks dated November 17, 1938 "On arrests, prosecutorial supervision and investigation" positively assessed the work of the NKVD in "cleansing the USSR of numerous espionage, terrorist, sabotage and wrecking personnel". At the same time, it listed "the biggest shortcomings and perversions" in the work of the NKVD and the prosecutor's office—mass unjustified arrests, gross violations of procedural norms, and so on. True, all this was attributed to the "enemies of the people" who made their way into the NKVD. Nevertheless, the need to organize further work "by means of perfect and reliable methods" was recognized. The decree forbade mass arrests and deportations, liquidated the judicial "troikas". A few days later, Yezhov was removed from the post of People's Commissar of Internal Affairs.

Mekhlis was also forced to respond to the changes. When, at the end of December, the military commissar and head of the political department of the Military Academy. M.V. Frunze asked for his permission to parse

personal file of the head of the academy division commander N.A. Verevkin-Rakhalsky due to the fact that in 1919-1920 he served together with the arrested commander of the 1st rank I.P. Belov and other "enemies of the people", they were refused. Moreover, Mekhlis reproached vigilant intercessors: "You cannot be held accountable for your work in 1919 with Belov. Judging by who worked with whom in 1919-20, we will kill all the cadres. It needs to be well substantiated."

Is it too late for the insight to come? By the end of 1938, the Red Army was already beheaded in the full sense of the word. Of the nine military workers (Voroshilov, Gamarnik, Yakir, Blucher, Bulin, Yegorov, Tukhachevsky, Budyonny and Uborevich) elected in 1934 by the 18th Congress of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks to the Central Committee, seven were declared enemies of the people in 1937-1938, participants in the "military-fascist conspiracy". The exceptions were Voroshilov and Buden-

' Souvenirs O.F. Red Army the day before. S. 93.

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ny, although the NKVD authorities also fabricated testimonies about his belonging to the "conspiracy" against the latter. Of the 36 prominent commanders and political workers elected at the UP All-Union Congress of Soviets as members of the All-Union Central Executive Committee, 30 were declared enemies of the people.

By November 1938, out of 108 members of the Military Council under the People's Commissar of Defense of the USSR, only 10 people had not been repressed. Among the high-ranking military men, the Secretary of the Council of the Union of the Central Executive Committee of the USSR I.S. Unshlikht and Secretary of the Defense Committee under the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR G.D. Bazilevich. 22 chiefs and 30 responsible employees of the departments of the People's Commissariat of Defense and the General Staff, commanders of the troops of the Moscow, Leningrad, Belorussian, Transbaikalian, Transcaucasian, North Caucasus, Central Asian, Ural, Kharkov military districts, the Special Red Banner Far Eastern Army, eight military commanders were repressed. - ny academies, institutes and schools. In total, during these two years, 408 people of the leading and commanding staff of the Red Army and the Navy were arrested and convicted by the Military Collegium of the Supreme Court of the USSR. 401 people were sentenced to the highest measure - execution, seven - to various terms of imprisonment in forced labor camps.

The consequences of flagrant lawlessness had a most fatal effect on the tragedy of the Red Army in the summer of 1941. Why, the whole war could have been different, not so long and bloody. The people and the army have at least twice paid dearly for the frenzied lust for power and the dictatorial pretensions of their great and small leaders: in the days of peace and the time of war.

As for the personal responsibility of Mekhlis for the destruction of military personnel, one cannot remain silent about the existence of a compromise point of view. For example, the former editor-in-chief of Krasnaya Zvezda, David Ortenberg, who knew him well personally, claimed that at the time of repressions, the head of the PU of the Red Army took some people under protection. Among those, he named not only himself, but also the deputy head of the PU Kuznetsov. According to the writer, the materials about the connections of the latter with the "enemies of the people" remained buried in the safe of Mekhlis? Alas, such examples are rare, and they did not determine the line of conduct of the head of the Red Army PU.

' Rehabilitation. pp. 300-302. 2 Ortenberg D.I. Stalin, Shcherbakov, Mekhlis and others. M., 1995. S. 7.

"EYES AND EARS" PARTS

The real situation in the Armed Forces that took shape at the end of the 1930s was very far from the victorious reports of Mekhlis at party congresses and plenums, at the forums of army political workers. His favorite thesis: the Red Army, purging itself of "enemies of the people", is becoming stronger and more combat-ready — blatantly contrasted with reality.

Thus, according to the report of the chief military prosecutor on suicides in the Red Army, their number was constantly growing: from 477 in 1938 to 684 in 1939 and 1362 in 1940. A similar trend was observed in the growth of suicide attempts, respectively: 355, 487, 618. One may object:



it is incorrect to compare absolute statistics without taking into account the growth in the size of the army during these years. However, in any case, as the main reason for suicide, only illness is higher than "fear of responsibility" - with such a formulation, the prosecutor defined a whole range of factors: people's fear of the NKVD torture chambers, unbearable moral oppression from absurd accusations against oneself, refusal to betray comrades and wear it.p. on them!

The level of combat training has dropped unprecedentedly, and military discipline has sharply weakened. "If we compare the training of our personnel before the events of these years, in 1936, and after these events, in 1939, it must be said that the level of combat training of the troops has fallen very much," said Marshal G.K. Zhukov. – Not only was the army, starting with the regiments, largely decapitated, it was also decomposed by these events. There was a terrible decline in discipline, it came to unauthorized absences, to desertion. Many commanders felt confused, unable to restore order."

Guiding documents of that time pointed to another evidence of the extreme moral oppression of military personnel - drunkenness, which, as follows from the order. People's Commissar of Defense of December 28, 1938, "became a real scourge of the army."

'TsAMO, f. 32, op. 11309, d. 13, l. 97, 99. 2 Op. by: Simonov K.M. Through the eyes of a man of my generation. M., 1988.

pp. 348-349.

These are additional facts to the numerous evidences available in the literature of how demoralized the personnel of the Red Army were, covered by a pogrom wave coming "from above", found themselves in the grip of the wild arbitrariness of the NKVD, deafened by hysterical cries about the penetration of conspirators, spies, terrorists. The numerous detachment of political workers was no exception. However, Mekhlis, reporting this to the Central Committee, attributed everything to the sabotage of the "enemies of the people", who allegedly headed the political agencies and special departments and harmed as much as they could. Thus, under the pretext of the need to clear the army ranks of "dead cats" - "proteges of gamarniki and bulin", he gave both himself and his henchmen indulgence for further beating of cadres.

Mekhlis saw his support in the commissars. The latter were introduced into the states of military units, formations and institutions even before he joined the Red Army PU - May 10, 1937. The emergence of a new institution, which so clearly reminded us of the situation of emergency during the Civil War, did not coincide by chance with the beginning of the "great terror". These events were certainly in sync.

Stalin and his entourage, apparently, did not care much that the introduction of this institution undermined, if not eliminated, the unity of command established with such difficulty in the Red Army. They were much more concerned about how quickly and reliably with the help of the commissars it would be possible to turn the red commanders into obedient "lambs", dumb executors of the supreme will.

In this regard, the public approving assessment given by him at a meeting of political workers in March 1938 to the behavior of one of the commissars is typical: "There was such a conversation in the Moscow District. It was said that I was a commander, and you were a divisional commissar; this was said so that the commissar would not forget about the high rank of the commander, and he replied that I don't give a damn about it, that he is a member of the Military Council and that he is also a commissar – this is the answer of a real commissar."

On this basis, Mekhlis even went into conflict with the Deputy People's Commissar of Defense, the head of the department for the command staff of the Red Army, the army commissar of the 2nd rank Shchadenko. The latter was one of the most active promoters of the repressive policy, but he was also concerned about the scale of arrests and dismissals of commanders

personal degrees. Based on the decisions of the January Plenum of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks in 1938 "On the mistakes of party organizations in the exclusion of communists from the party, on the formal

bureaucratic attitude to appeals of those expelled from the CPSU(b) and about measures to eliminate these shortcomings", he instructed the military councils of the districts, the heads of the central departments of NGOs and the heads of military academies to review all submissions for the dismissal of the command staff, having comprehensively checked the thoroughness of the existing defamatory material. It was necessary to submit for dismissal only after confirmation of compromising data. Unreasonably dismissed were ordered to return to the Red Army. In a separate paragraph, the directive demanded "to remove from the personal files of those restored to the Red Army unconfirmed materials compromising them (characteristics, early certification, etc.). The same should be done with respect to the commanding staff, presented, but not subject to dismissal due to unfounded motives!

Mekhlis not only left a mark on the document: "I consider this point to be wrong," but also challenged it. In a letter to the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks and addressed to the People's Commissar of Defense, he expressed the wish "to immediately cancel this obviously hostile order of comrade. Shchadenko. When considering cases, he qualified the requirement to send responsible employees to the field for investigation and to call those dismissed for a personal conversation as "an unacceptable delay and red tape in the analysis of cases." And he called the removal from personal files of all compromising materials that did not receive confirmation a brake on delivering the Red Army from enemies: "Such cleaning of personal files creates complete irresponsibility in studying people and conditions for harboring enemies."

Unable to insist on his own, the head of the PU of the Red Army in practice sabotaged Shchadenko's order and demanded the same from his subordinates. "Through the line of political workers, I will not allow the removal of materials from personal files," he said at the above-mentioned All-Army Conference of Political Workers. In the same place, he publicly called "stupid thing" another directive from Shchadenko, sent by the commander of the troops of the districts and demanding to be sent to the administration

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Repressions in the Red Army (30s). Collection of documents from the funds of the RGVA. Napoli, 1996, p. 292.

the decision on the command staff of the Red Army, party political characteristics and service reviews for commanders from the captain to the brigade commander for their study and promotion. He regarded this directive as impermissible command of party organizations.

Thus, the head of the PD and the deputy people's commissar of defense publicly urged the commanding staff not to follow the orders of the senior chief, the same as him, the deputy people's commissar. It is difficult to find a more convincing example of how seriously this line of conduct posed a danger to the principles of unity of command, to the interests of strengthening military order and discipline. And the point here, as it may seem, is not only the personality of Mekhlis himself. The interference of military commissars in the operational activities of commanders, overt and covert supervision of them, was a common, widespread practice that undermined the authority of the commander, chief, and undermined the foundations of military service.

At the All-Army Conference of political workers in April 1938, Mekhlis, calling the commissars the "birthday men" of this conference, reminded them of Stalin's words that "the commissar is the eyes and ears of the party and government." Meanwhile, the speaker noted, many of them still feel like pompolites (that is, political assistants to commanders). The newly minted commissars themselves got used to this situation, and it suits the commanders as well. This must now be done away with, solemnly proclaimed the head of the PU. Since the military commissar is a representative of the party and the Soviet government in part, then "you are obliged to check and judge all political and command workers, including the commander, on business."

The commanding staff, thus, was placed under the control of the commissars, public and private. In the Political Directorate of the Red Army, as part of the department of leading party bodies, a department was created to study the political and moral state of commanders and commanding staff, where accumulated all the negative information about this category of leaders. Absolutely

By a secret directive to the heads of political departments of districts, armies, commissars and heads of political agencies of formations, units and educational institutions dated April 17, 1938, Mekhlis ordered twice a year (by June and December 1) to submit to him detailed political characteristics for the commanders of units and formations, starting from the regiment

and higher. It was categorically required to ensure the strictest regime of secrecy - to write characteristics by hand, not to leave copies, and not even inform your direct management. Mekhlis paid special attention: "Political characteristics are submitted by the commissars of divisions, brigades and corps directly (underlined by Mekhlis. - Yu.R.) to the Political Administration in my name without submitting them to the district."

According to the functions, their performers were also selected. After this, is it any wonder that the commissars in their majority not only failed to protect their commanders from repressions. Moreover, many of them initiated shameful proceedings and led the fight against the notorious "enemies of the people".

Here is one of such zealous figures - the commissar of the 11th cavalry division of the LVO, regimental commissar D.G. Kulakov. In a letter to Stalin, he boasted that only during June-August 1937 he sent submissions to the military council of the district for 40 people of "politically unreliable commanders of the division's units." "Of all these dismissed, a significant part was arrested by the NKVD," Kulakov considered it necessary to emphasize. And yet, even he was dismissed from the army, and, which particularly angered the regimental commissar, "for opposing measures to expose the 'enemies of the people'."

Former military commissar of a separate construction battalion V.K. Smirnov also had something to boast about to his beloved leader: "But I say without boasting that for two years I gave enough signals about the presence of sabotage, but it reached the hornet's nest of pests, spies who settled in the OKVDA political department"!

How many kulaks and smirnovs were there, whose hands were completely untied in the conditions of total pogrom! By the way, they were often later blamed for the repressions, after which they were thrown away like used rags.

What researchers were able to say in full voice only in our days was clearly visible to the most astute observers in those years. Trotsky, speaking about the consequences of the introduction of the institution of military commissars in the Red Army and recalling, in this regard, the military councils and commissars introduced in the years

'RGVA, f. 9, op. 29, d. 357, l. 301, 312.

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Civil War, wrote: "The historical film unfolds in the reverse order, and what was a progressive measure of the revolution returns as a disgusting and Thermidorian caricature ... At the head of the army is Voroshilov, the people's commissar, marshal, holder of orders, and so on, and others. But the actual power is concentrated in the Mekhlis; who, on Stalin's direct instructions, is turning the army upside down. The same is happening in every military district, in every division, in every regiment. Everywhere sits his Mekhlis, an agent of Stalin and Yezhov, and enforces "vigilance" instead of knowledge, order and discipline. All relations in the army acquired a shaky, shaky, floating character. No one knows where patriotism ends, where betrayal begins. No one is sure what is possible, what is impossible ... Everyone is waiting and anxiously looking around. Honest workers give up... The foundations of the army are shaken... The real culprits hide behind denunciations of pests. Drunkenness is increasing among the commanders, and the commissars compete with them in this respect as well. Covered by police despotism, the regime of anarchy is now undermining all aspects of Soviet life; but it is especially disastrous in the army ... "

Even if these harsh assessments were dictated by Trotsky's hatred of Stalin, who can say that they did not reflect the true picture?

By his own admission, Lev Zakharovich, by the time he joined the PU of the Red Army, the situation with the cadres of the political staff was "extremely difficult." The shortage included 10,525 people, or 29.8 percent of their regular staff, including 51 percent of the top political staff and 45.8 percent of the senior ones. Looking ahead a little, let's say that he did even more with his own hands: in 1938, an additional 3,176 political workers were dismissed from the army, primarily for three reasons - in connection with the arrest, in connection with their participation in the past in various anti-party groups, as well as "in order to clear" people of "suspicious" nationalities — Poles, Germans, Chinese, etc.

The problem of understaffing was exacerbated by such a specific phenomenon of that time as "vreed" - the temporary performance of a position. The scale of this extremely negative phenomenon is given by the report to Mekhlis on May 8, 1938, by the head of the department of the PU of the Red Army, divisional commissar A.N. Khramenko: at the Military Academy.

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M.V. Frunze "everyone is a pest all around: the head and commissar of the academy, the entire staff of the political department, all the commissars of the faculties, all the heads of departments, the entire staff of the educational department, all the heads of courses". Such a picture was by no means uncommon.

"A terrible army disease" was called by Mekhlis himself, who was forced to admit that "there are more weeds than approved people", but he is silent about the true causes of this phenomenon. And it was rooted, first of all, in the fear of those bosses, on whom the approval for this or that position depended, to make a mistake, to appoint a potential "enemy". The grounds for fear were the most extensive, because, proceeding from the irrational logic of the organizers of the repressions, everyone was "smeared": someone with someone from the already identified "enemies" or those who would be identified later served together, met someone at exercises, training camps, party events, even rode in the same train car (it was incriminated, it happened, and this). Therefore, officials did their best to avoid making independent decisions when appointment to positions.

Who, in the opinion of the head of the PD, was supposed to fill the gaping personnel gap? To begin with, they resorted to injection from the outside. On January 9, 1938, the Politburo of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks instructed Mekhlis and Malenkov, who headed the department of leading party bodies in the Central Committee of the party, to select 100 graduates of universities and the Institute of Red Professors for appointment as army political workers within three days. Repeated mobilization of the Central Committee for party political work in the army continued to be one of the ways to eliminate the shortage of personnel. In 1938, 258 people were called up in this way, and in the following year - already 5,500 civilian communists. But what did it lead to? Many, as Lev Zakharovich reported to the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks, were burdened by their work in the army, were "bearers of low discipline."

The main source of candidates for filling vacancies should have been the army ranks. "The political agencies," Mekhlis ordered in this connection to the heads of the political departments of the military districts and armies on January 14, 1938, "should work tirelessly to cultivate genuinely Bolshevik political work.

'RGVA, f. 9, op. 29, d. 351, l. 248.

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nikovs of Stalinist hardening, capable of steadily increasing the Bolshevikization of the political apparatus of the Red Army and mercilessly fighting against all enemies of the people, to the end and without a trace to eliminate the consequences of sabotage in the ranks of the Red Army. So that no one would have any doubts that such qualities are encouraged by the leadership, in the same directive he instructed to present political workers who "have shown themselves to be true leaders of the masses, staunch in the fight against

Trotsky-Bukharin and bourgeois-nationalist spies and saboteurs", in accordance with the decision of the Central Committee of the party and in connection with the 20th anniversary of the Red Army and the Navy, to an extraordinary promotion in military rank.

The actual army cadres, however, turned out to be so weakened that they could not give a solid increase in candidates for nomination in a limited time. True, this is if one adheres to the established and tested procedure for the formation of command and political composition, the gradual cultivation of personnel in accordance with experience and level of training. But Mekhlis, himself nominated to his post at the arbitrariness of the leader, did not stoop to "some" elementary norms, guided by the well-known slogan that in our country, if necessary, "anyone becomes a hero." And arbitrarily, in an emergency, without taking into account the level of training, he resorted to mass nomination.

In fact, he cheered up, speaking to the participants of the All-Army Conference, the Red Army, like no one else, is rich in personnel. And therefore "there is no shortage of political staff in the army, there is a shortage in the work of the Political Directorate of the Red Army and in the work of the Military Councils of districts and Puokrov." It is necessary, they say, only "to have the courage to nominate young talented people." And they were nominated: political officers became regimental commissars, heads of political departments of divisions, military commissars of brigades and divisions.

The basis of such a personnel policy was not the level of professional competence, but political reliability, absolute loyalty to the ruling regime. The price of such nominations without discounts was shown by the war with Finland.

And the spells, frankly speaking, helped little. A year has passed, and the problem of "wreed" was still on the agenda. "No later than February 10, 1939, liquidate Wridstvo among the political workers of the nomenklatura of the Military Councils of the districts. By the same date, complete the material for all ... political workers

of the nomenklatura of the Political Directorate of the Red Army," the head of the PU was forced to telegraph again to the military districts.

In an attempt to solve the problem, he even entered into a formal conflict with the People's Commissar of Defense, proposing to take 50-60 students of the Military-Political Academy (and these were mainly political officers and senior political officers) in order to immediately appoint them military commissars and heads of political departments of divisions. and buildings, that is, through three or four steps. But here even the usually pliable Voroshilov objected, reasonably believing that people should be given the opportunity to at least complete their studies. Faced with resistance, Lev Zakharovich turns directly to Stalin, Andreev and Zhdanov (copy to Voroshilov). He proves that the situation with senior political personnel remains tense, there are 227 vacancies in the military districts for the positions of commissars and heads of political agencies of divisions and corps. There is only one way out - the one that he offers.

In order to eliminate the shortfall in the middle rank of political workers, Mekhlis had the same recipe - mass promotion. On January 20, 1938, he turned to Stalin, Kaganovich and other secretaries of the Central Committee for permission to involve the most proven and competent Red Army soldiers and junior commanders as deputies and assistants to political instructors (there were at least 15-20 such thousands of people). And such permission was obtained. In addition, by decision of the Politburo, 5,000 deputy political commissars were allowed to remain in the ranks of the Red Army from among those leaving for the reserve. Those of them who were candidate members of the party were allowed to perform the duties of junior political officers.

For the political coaching of this contingent, from October 1, 6-month courses were organized in the districts. In connection with the growth in the number of the Red Army, more and more middle-level political workers were required, so that in the next year, 1939, almost 9 thousand deputies of junior political officers were trained at these courses. Cooked hastily, according to a lightweight program. IN

In July 1940, the PU was forced to state that "a 6-month training period does not provide for the preparation of a full-fledged political worker in political and military terms." Due to this

APRF, f. 3, op. 50, d. 8, l. 135-138.

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term of study was extended to 1 years, and the courses were transferred to the standard curriculum and programs of district military-political schools. And somehow it was forgotten that at one time at the All-Army Conference of the Komsomol organizations of the Red Army in May 1938, Mekhlis pompously called the involvement of Red Army soldiers and junior commanders in political work "Stalin's call", "truly historical for the fate of political work in the Red Army." Emergency measures simply could not give any other result.

Since 1938, all forces have been thrown into the liquidation of the shortage of political staff and "Wridstvo" - district military schools, one-year retraining courses for military commissars, propagandists and newspaper workers at the military-political schools of central subordination - them. Lenin, them. Engels and them. Frunze, converted from 6-month to annual Higher Courses for the Improvement of the Political Staff of the Red Army. A small part of those previously dismissed from the Armed Forces were returned to the army (in 1938-1940 - 386 people). Thousands of communists from the "citizen" went to military political work.

The military councils and heads of political departments of military districts and armies, under the strictest responsibility, were ordered to fill all vacancies no later than October 25, 1938 and, using internal resources, form a reserve of political workers at all levels - from political officers to commissars and heads of political departments of formations.

But a felled forest cannot rise overnight. In June 1939, Mekhlis sent a directive to the same addressees, in which he noted that his instruction to create a reserve of political workers in districts and formations was not fulfilled. Each military district, under the personal responsibility of the heads of the political departments of the districts and armies, was assigned control figures for reservists—military commissars and heads of political departments of formations, military commissars of regiments and individual battalions. Nevertheless, until the very departure of Mekhlis from the PU of the Red Army, this problem could not be fully resolved. As he reported to the Central Committee of the party, out of the shortage, which amounted to 45,459 political posts in 1938-1940, about 4 thousand remained vacant by May 1940 (at the same time, the author of the report went on a forgery: the shortage amounted to six percent not specified by him but not less than nine).

Personnel work was carried out against an appropriate ideological background. Endless maxims about the danger of "enemies of the people" of all stripes, about the need to bring to every Red Army soldier the provisions of the law on punishment for treason, about the danger of ideological conciliation and blunting class vigilance, did not descend from the lips of the head of the PU of the Red Army. Identification of hostile machinations proceeded tirelessly.

So, on April 19, 1938, by his order, Mekhlis dismissed from the army and brought to trial the acting head of the school of the party activists of the 14th mechanized brigade, senior political instructor T.K. Bepalov. The reason was that he delivered a "provocative" speech at a meeting of non-party teachers, "slanderingly" covered the situation in the USSR. In turn, the head of the political department of the brigade and the acting military commissar of the 5th mechanized corps were punished for "failure to report".

"Political carelessness" was allowed by the commissar of the 3rd tank brigade, regimental commissar Dolgov, the head of the political department, battalion commissar Fedoseev, and political instructor Vlaskin. Mekhlis's order gives an "impressive" picture of what happened: someone pierced the poster "Cadres decide everything" hanging in the party office of the brigade. The nature of the punctures left no doubt that there was a "sally of the enemy of our party and Soviet power." Dolgov and Fedoseev, instead of reacting sharply, acted "in the office" - they simply removed this poster, and Vlaskin burned it, "thus making it difficult for the investigating authorities to work."

To the natural question of today's reader, is it really for the sake of such a case it was necessary to issue an order for the Red Army and did not the head of the Political Directorate have more serious matters, there is an answer. Anti-Soviet, enemy intrigues, as they say, were sucked out of thin air in order to maintain the state of emergency, the atmosphere of total fear and denunciation.

Since the autumn of 1938, it became easier for Mekhlis to do this - the "Short Course" of the history of the CPSU (b) was published. Directives immediately flew into place to make it the basis of all work on the ideological and political education of all categories of servicemen. In favor of the new training course, at the direction of the head of the PU of the Red Army, the training time was decisively redistributed. In military schools, 100 hours were allotted for studying the history of the USSR, while the same "Brief. course" - 220 yes

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plus another 30 hours for the academic discipline "Methods of combating espionage, sabotage, sabotage and terrorist activities..." (which was, in essence, the same thing).

A final exam in the history of the CPSU (b) was established. The score thus turned out to be at least 2.5: | not in favor of the history of the Fatherland, despite the fact that this course was thoroughly ideologized. And by the directive of November 29, 1939, the course of the history of the USSR was completely abolished. All 280 hours of study time allotted for the socio-economic cycle were absorbed by the history of the CPSU (b) - 240 hours and party political work - 40. After that, who was not clear on the accents placed by the Bolshevik elite and its faithful adherent with four rhombuses in his buttonhole and big star of the army commissar of the 1st rank on the sleeve of the tunic?

With the publication of the "Short Course", it became easier for Mekhlis to carry out the task, which he considered the most important for himself - to plant the ideology of Stalin's personality cult. From the very first days of his tenure as head of the PU of the Red Army, there are literally a host of examples of this. Many of the most pompous epithets addressed to the leader came from the lips of Mekhlis at the April meeting of political workers of the Red Army, at the 18th Congress of the CPSU (b). The pathos of his report on the results of the congress at a meeting of the party activists of the Kyiv Special Military District, circulated on April 6, 1939 by Pravda, speaks for itself: "Stalin is Lenin today. Stalin is our banner. Stalin is a victory. Stalin is a world commune. Long live dear Stalin!"

In this regard, of particular interest are the circumstances under which the famous slogan "For the Motherland! For Stalin!". In periodical literature, there was even a dispute whether such a slogan or cry existed, did they go into battle with it in the Great Patriotic War? As established by O.F. Souvenirs, Mekhlis, starting from the Khasan events, and then during the battles at Khalkhin Gol, on the Karelian Isthmus, by all means available to him, he tried to make this slogan the main appeal for political workers, commanders, and Red Army soldiers.

Is it necessary to say that the unbridled praise of the "father of nations" and his policies in propaganda was accompanied by an absolute

' Souvenirs O.F. Red Army the day before. S. 31.

the colossal sacrifices made by the people on the altar of Stalin's despotism.

Mekhlis showed an enviable ability for verbal and semantic balancing act when it was necessary to explain to the country and the army a sharp turn in foreign policy and the reason for concluding a friendship agreement with yesterday's sworn enemy - fascist Germany. The treaty eliminated the threat of war with Germany, demonstrating the "brilliant victory of Stalin's foreign policy," the head of the PU advised the leadership of the political departments of the districts and armies. In his work with personnel, he demanded that the Anglo-French "provocative" policy be criticized, that the Soviet-German pact "completely justified [itself]... It eliminates possible military clashes in Europe..."

True, later, in the summer of 1940, the Soviet leaders came to their senses somewhat. Stalin instructed Mekhlis behind the scenes, in political studies, to stir up distrust of the Germans. And still, in order to overcome the inertia of the thinking of the masses, considerable propaganda tricks were required.

The extreme hypocrisy of the head of the PU of the Red Army was clearly manifested in relation to the army party organization. The system was worked out in such a way that a member of the party found himself in these years, as it were, under crossfire: Voroshilov's order was strictly enforced, according to which all military personnel expelled from the CPSU (b) for political reasons were subject to immediate dismissal from the ranks of the Red Army. In most cases, this was accompanied by arrest.

Speaking at the All-Army Conference, Mekhlis said literally the following: "Bringing to account and expulsions from the party increased in 1937 (more than 11 thousand people were expelled. - Yu.R.) from month to month, exponentially.. If the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks had not stopped this criminal bacchanalia, we would have killed the entire party organization of the Red Army" (emphasized by Mekhlis. - Yu.R.). This begs the question: who is to blame for this bacchanalia? Were it not the Voroshilovs and the Mekhlises, who were in a hurry to serve the leader, eradicating even the shadow of dissent? It turns out not. According to the speaker, "screamers, reinsurers, enemies" have worked hard here, who benefit from the weakening of the ranks of pairs

Okay, so be it. But then, after such philippines addressed to the exposed "enemies", one should have expected that the mass exclusions from the party would stop, the "witch hunt" would subside. Nothing happened at all: the pogrom continued with the same force, declining only towards the end of the year. In total, 7,753 people were expelled from the party in 1938, two-thirds of them as "enemies of the people" and for having links with "enemies." Quite a few were expelled from the party in the future, while the blow was delivered primarily to the command staff, which further weakened the readiness of the Red Army for a future war.

Of course, the leadership of the CPSU(b) needed a mass party to consolidate its power. In place of communists with experience, proven in the battles of the Civil War and post-war construction, there came young people inexperienced in politics and already fooled by official propaganda, for whom it was much more difficult to see in the person of Stalin and his entourage the grave-diggers of the revolution.

If we talk about Mekhlis, then with great success he ensured a sharp influx of new forces into the army party organization. In less than two and a half years (from January 1938 to May 1940), the number of communists in the Red Army increased by almost 3.5 times - to almost 211 thousand members and 224 thousand candidate members of the party. Particular growth, the head of the PU reported to the Central Committee, was given by the participation of the Red Army in the hostilities at Khasan, Khalkhin Gol, in the campaign in Western Ukraine and Western Belarus, in the war with Finland.

What a grimace of fate! Most of the people, at the call of their souls, rushed to the "front ranks" of the builders of a new society, sincerely believing in the "kingdom of freedom", but in fact they only cemented the totalitarianism that had established itself in the country with their impulse. And Mekhlis, like the entire elite, shamelessly exploited the enthusiasm of the people, tightly tying them with party discipline to the Stalinist chariot.

Communists with experience, proven in the battles of the civil war and post-war construction, were replaced by young people inexperienced in politics, who were much easier to manipulate. "The army party organization is young and old," Mekhlis reported to the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks in May 1940. "Communists under the age of 30 make up 66.1%, from 30 to 40 years old – 38.5%, and over 40 years old – only 3.4%." Admitted to the party before 1920, there were only 4.4%, who received party cards in the last

two years (1938-1939) accounted for more than one-third of the army party organization'. This was a conscious course of the Stalinist political elite to change the social and age composition of the army party organization, as well as the party as a whole.



Explaining what is meant by the slogan of "Bolshevization" of the Red Army, Mekhlis verbally warned against a mechanical increase in the number of party and Komsomol organizations: "It is necessary to achieve quality by educating those newly admitted to the party and Komsomol in the Bolshevik way." In fact, as the facts show, by all means he dissolved communists with experience and firm convictions in the overwhelming mass of those who were completely inexperienced in politics.

During these years, he also had another role, akin to Beria's. Just as the ominous Lavrenty, in order to play on the authority of the ruling regime, was allowed to return from prisons and camps someone who seemed to be there only because of Yezhov's enemy activities, so Lev Zakharovich was allowed to restore part of the military to the party. At the same time, while earning the authority of a principled leader, he was not averse to working for the public, hitting bureaucrats and reinsurers.

This is what the delegates of the XVIII Congress of the CPSU (b) heard from him: "We also had such a wild case of exclusion from the party. The representative of a special department of one regiment told the commissar that he wanted to take away the head of the club, political instructor Rybnikov. Commissar Gashinsky whispered about this to the party organization, and Rybnikov was expelled from the party by the grassroots party organization. It soon became clear that Rybnikov was a good Bolshevik and that the Specialists wanted to take him ... to work with them. The error has been corrected, but Rybnikov was quite agitated."

To what degree of moral decline one had to go, to what hypocrisy one had to slide, presenting such "wild" cases as a rare exception! But purges from the Party, dismissal from the army, arrests and lawless reprisals on absurd, most absurd grounds were the rule.

G Mekhlis L. On the work of the Political Directorate of the Red Army. From the report of the Political Directorate of the Red Army of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks on May 23, 1940 // *Izvestiya of the Central Committee of the CPSU*, 1990, No. 3. P. 195.

In terms of political mimicry, hardly anyone could compete with our hero. Diligently repeating propaganda clichés about the development of intra-Party democracy, under various plausible pretexts, he strangled it —already short—as best he could. The Central Party Bureau, which for many years on an elective, public basis led party work in the People's Commissariat of Defense, the head of the PU mockingly called the "central cork", which the enemies of the people allegedly created "as a screen to cover up their dark deeds". Turning to the secretary of the Central Committee Andreev and the head of the department of the Central Committee Malenkov, he achieved the abolition of the bureau, and instead created a subordinate structure to himself - the department of party political work in the central apparatus of the People's Commissariat of Defense. A party commission was created at the department, which was also directly subordinate to the PU of the Red Army.

Mekhlis also obtained permission from the Central Committee to change the procedure for bringing commanders and commissars of regiments, brigades, divisions and equal formations to party responsibility. Here the offensive against inner-party democracy proceeded in stages. Initially, on February 25, 1938, a directive was sent to all political agencies, in which the established practice of resolving these issues in the primary party organizations was recognized as incorrect. The question of the party membership of commanders and commissars could be resolved only "with the knowledge and consent" of the PU of the Red Army.

On December 28 of the same year, a new directive followed, prudently approved by the Central Committee. The previous directive (dated February 25) "turned out to be insufficient," Lev Zakharovich declared, because "individual screamers" had the opportunity to defame the command and political staff, which because of this could not "lead confidently, without looking around, lead." Therefore, the commanders and commissars of individual units and formations were now completely removed from the party "jurisdiction" of the primary organizations. The material compromising them had to be transferred to a higher party authority - the party commission of a brigade, division, army, military district and considered in the presence of the secretary of the primary party organization. The issue of expulsion from the party of the commander and commissar of the regiment and above could be decided only with the special permission of the Political Directorate of the Red Army.

In May 1940, the primary party organizations were deprived of their last right in relation to the communists registered with them.

leaders - give them characteristics. Only a senior leader could do this.

Needless to say, all these changes were accompanied by incantations about concern for the authority of the commanding and political staff, although in reality they meant an attack on the last islands of inner-party democracy. At the same time, the mehlis would like to create their arbitrariness without wide publicity. Lev Zakharovich had not yet managed to settle in his office in the Political Directorate, but had already asked the Central Committee for permission not to implement the decision of the January 1938 plenum on the mandatory publication in the press of information from party commissions on the exclusion of communists from the party. Like, "this can be used by enemies and contribute to the disclosure of military secrets." And he achieved his goal: on March 5, all the heads of the political departments of the districts and armies were given the corresponding directive, while they were graciously allowed to report the facts of exclusion from the party at meetings in the "primary organizations". Well, Mehlis was no stranger to ostentatious democracy.

#### FROM MONGOLIAN DESERT TO KARELIAN ROCKS

Throughout the second half of the 1930s and early 1940s, the Soviet Union, one way or another, fought without leaving the chain of local wars and armed conflicts on the western and eastern borders. Tacit participation in the national revolutionary war in Spain of 1936-1939 and the Japanese-Chinese war of 1937-1939, military conflict near Lake Khasan (July-August 1938), fighting near the Khalkhin-Gol River (May-August 1939), the so-called "liberation campaign" to the eastern regions of Poland (western regions of Ukraine and Belarus) in September 1939, and then to Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina in June 1940, the war with Finland (1939-1940) - such a chain of events even gives some historians reason to believe that our country entered World War II long before June 22, 1941.

This point of view can be affirmed or refuted only with a clear understanding of what goals the Soviet Union pursued by initiating its participation in these events or being drawn into them. There is no conclusive answer yet. The author of this book, like some other researchers, was at one time inclined to the conclusion that

that the participation of the USSR in these wars and conflicts was the result of not only the aggressiveness of some neighbors and the legitimate desire of our country to secure its western and eastern borders, but also the revival in foreign policy of the concept of world socialist revolution, popular in Soviet political and political military circles in the 1920s.

However, a deeper and more comprehensive analysis of realpolitik shows that this is most likely not the case. Stalin, who had previously not been very sympathetic to the idea of a world revolution, the apologist of which was the hated Trotsky, quite quickly saw the utopianity of waiting for a world revolutionary fire. He did not remove his long-standing strategic goal - to reduce the front of capitalism, to eliminate the "capitalist encirclement" - from the agenda, but moved to its solution from completely different positions. Not to sacrifice the interests and resources of the Soviet country for the sake of resolving it in favor of the world proletariat, but, on the contrary, to win back from the class enemy all new footholds in the interests of our own country. So to speak, Stalin evolved from an internationalist into a Russian imperialist.

Being a pragmatist to the marrow of his bones, he began to see the Communist International as a hindrance to his plans, especially since a significant part of the Comintern cadres shared Trotskyist views. It is no coincidence that he was little concerned about the fate of the communist parties in those countries where fascism had triumphed, and the communists of a number of countries who emigrated to the USSR, like the apparatus of the Comintern, were mostly repressed.

In the 1930s, the Bolshevik leadership, in solving its strategic tasks in the international arena, relied not on the world revolution, but on the Red Army. Propaganda through the mouths of Molotov, Zhdanov, Shcherbakov and other political figures

to the public consciousness the idea of the offensive strategy of destruction inherent in the first socialist state, of the need, in a favorable situation, to take the initiative of offensive actions "in order to expand the front of socialism." In essence, under the cover of the slogan "liberation", territorial increments were prepared and carried out at the expense of neighboring states. Even Stalin did not hide the fact that "from the point of view of the struggle of forces on a world scale between socialism

and capitalism" The USSR is doing a great job, because "we (i.e. the Soviet Union. — O.R.) are expanding the front of socialism and shrinking the front of capitalism"!

Mekhlis also joined in the propaganda of these ideas. Concluding his speech at the 18th Party Congress, he stated literally the following: "Comrades, the time is not far off when our army, international in its dominant ideology... will help the workers of the aggressor countries to free themselves from the yoke of fascism, from the yoke of capitalist slavery and liquidate the capitalist encirclement of which Comrade Stalin spoke"? Maybe it was a slip of the tongue, an impulsive statement not previously agreed upon with the Secretary General? Excluded. And not only because the speaker would never have dared to take such a rash step. The facts speak for themselves: if his words did not express the official line of the Stalinist leadership, he would inevitably be removed from his post, if not worse. In reality, a few days later, Lev Zakharovich was elected a member of the Central Committee, and then a member of its Organizing Bureau. With "fell into heresy" in the CPSU (b) acted differently.

In fairness, it must be said that, calling for a reduction in the front of capitalism, Mekhlis was not going to sit behind the backs of others. Wherever the Red Army crossed bayonets with the enemy in those years, he himself visited, whether it was the hot sands of Khalkhin Gol or the icy rocks of the Karelian Isthmus.

The first touchstone was a trip by decision of the Politburo of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks of June 20, 1938 to the Far East in connection with the aggravation of the situation in the area of Lake Khasan. When Mekhlis and Deputy People's Commissar of Internal Affairs Frinovsky arrived in Khabarovsk, the commander of the Far Eastern Red Banner Front, Marshal Blucher, seemed to already know what "help" should be expected from them. After an introductory conversation with Moscow emissaries, it was not by chance that he said to his wife: "Sharks have arrived who want to devour me, they will devour me or I don't know them. The second is incredible.

Mekhlis staged a real beating of cadres here. Cleansing from the "enemies of the people" parts of the Special Red Banner Far Eastern

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Cit. Quoted from: Nevezhin V.A. Offensive War Syndrome. Soviet propaganda on the eve of the "holy battles", 1939-1941. M.. 1997. S. 111. 2 Mekhlis L.Z. Speech at the 18th Congress of the CPSU(b). S. 16.

Army (nowadays transformed into a front) he began with... The Red Banner Song and Dance Ensemble of the USSR, which arrived there from Moscow on tour. Stalin immediately received a ciphered telegram: "I report: the situation in the Red Banner Song Ensemble is difficult. I come to the conclusion: a spy-terrorist group is operating in the ensemble. Fired nineteen people on the spot. I'm investigating. The composition includes former officers, children of kulaks, anti-Soviet elements. He brought the head of the special department to work ... "In the end, 22 people parted ways with the ensemble (well, not with life yet), five of them were nevertheless arrested.

Well, as far as the personnel of the OKDVA are concerned, here the head of the PU of the Red Army turned around with might and main. Obviously, it should be noted that the repressions against the Far East were predetermined long before the inspection trip of Mekhlis. Going to Khabarovsk, he already had a clear intention - to "clean" the personnel mercilessly. It is no coincidence that Frinovsky, Deputy People's Commissar of Internal Affairs, who became famous for butchery and was executed with his boss Yezhov, was sent along with him.

The telegram sent by Mekhlis to the leader on July 28 gives an idea of the scale of what was done only at the first stage: "I fired two hundred and fifteen political workers, a significant part of them were arrested. But the cleansing of the political apparatus, especially of the lower levels, is far from being completed by me. I think that it is impossible to leave Khabarovsk without at least a rough understanding of the command staff.

Skirmishes took place all the time between the commander of the front and the head of the PU of the Red Army directly in the area of operations on Khasan. The fact is that Blucher insisted on his own assessment of the border incident that started the conflict. Namely, in the area of the height of Zaozernaya, the border was violated by Soviet border guards, in conditions of high tension, this provoked the Japanese. He reported his opinion to Moscow and demanded the punishment of the guilty.

In a telegram in response, sent on behalf of Stalin and Molotov and addressed not only to Blucher, but also to Mekhlis and Frinovsky, People's Commissar for Defense Voroshilov called the commander's statements nonsense. And on August 1, in a conversation over a direct wire, Stalin

Volkogonov D.A. Triumph and tragedy. Book. 1. S. 544.

generally questioned the desire of his interlocutor Blucher "to really fight against the Japanese."

The Moscow emissary, feeling the excitement of hunting, since the real attitude of the leader towards Blucher was no secret to him, did not begin to understand the true circumstances of the case, but blindly accepted the assessment dictated from the Kremlin. In the position of the marshal, he saw double-dealing, "pouring water on the mill of the Japanese", hostile motives. "Sometimes it is difficult to distinguish when a commander or a masked person is speaking in front of you," he concluded in a detailed telegram to Stalin and Voroshilov on July 27, 1938.

According to the memoirs of G.L. Blucher, her husband "returned from Khasan in a state of extreme excitement... From the story of Vasily Konstantinovich, I understood the following. Mekhlis interfered in everything all the time, gave his orders, trying to replace the commander. He, Blucher, was forced to cancel one order of Mekhlis of the 40th division. He said that if this order had been carried out, the Japanese would have scalped the 40th division.

Morally and psychologically, they also tried to finish off the marshal after the end of the conflict on Hassan. The first violin belonged to the same Mekhlis and Frinovsky. The leitmotif of their reports to Moscow is the call to remove Blucher from his post as soon as possible. Thus, in a lengthy telegram sent to Stalin and Voroshilov on August 12, the head of the RKKA PU reported: "Things here are, but to my deep conviction [in such a state] that the issue should be resolved as soon as possible. In the presence of subordinates, a person known to you behaves in such a way that it undermines discipline. On August 18, Blucher had already left for Moscow on Voroshilov's call, and he was rushing after him: "The Red Army men and commanders are not engaged in military affairs, but are distracted by household work. Combat training, I repeat my wording, comes last... A person known to you will say that this is a slander against the army and him... Unfortunately, this person hid the true state of things from the People's Commissar for many years and deceived, consciously or unconsciously is another question, our Central Committee. And a kind of apotheosis of rejection, hatred for Blucher was a cipher telegram sent to Stalin and Voroshilov on August 24: "I could write hundreds

pages characterizing inactivity, bordering on a crime known to you faces."

On the telegrams and reports of Mekhlis, the decision of the Main Military Council, which was mentioned above and which predetermined the tragic death of Blucher, was largely based.

On Khasan, the head of the PU of the Red Army not only interfered in the operational activities of the command, but also carried out a speedy trial and reprisals in his own style. On his orders, lieutenants Lebedev and Akhmetov and political instructor Mordvinov were arrested. Them and another lieutenant

accused of cowardice and treason on the grounds that they abandoned their batteries to the mercy of fate and thereby sowed panic among the fighters. By law, they were to be tried by a military tribunal. But Mekhlis was impatient to pass his own verdict. Having personally interrogated the defendants, he requested by telegram from Stalin and Voroshilov a sanction to "execute all four without trial by my order." The basis is "so as not to drag out the issue" (!). How can one disagree with the emotional assessment of the famous historian O.F. Suvenirova: "Here it is, the essence of a fanatical fanatic, capable and ready "to quickly resolve the issue" without any investigation or trial, shoot left and right."

A new area of battles - Khalkhin Gol turned out to be different from Hassan for Mekhlis. His habitual desire to intervene in the operational command and control of the troops was severely suppressed by G.K. Zhukov, put at the head of the 1st Army Group and who so brilliantly showed himself as a commander of the modern type. So the head of the Red Army PD had to mainly deal with party political work, especially since there was no end to the affairs.

Mekhlis, still from Moscow, on June 26, 1939, instructed the political administration of the Trans-Baikal Military District to immediately interrupt the vacations of political workers, and also to return to their units those who are on business trips, on various courses and work. In fact, increase vigilance. Carry out explanatory work among the Red Army soldiers in connection with Japanese provocations on the border and

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Cit. Quoted from: Modern and Contemporary History, 2004, No. 1. P. 179. 2 Souvenirs O.F. Education in combat and reward // Geopolitika i Bezopasnost

nost, 1994, No. 2, p. 54.

the need to bring units to full combat readiness. The political departments and newspapers of the formations must be ready for the campaign.

The introduction into the consciousness of the soldiers of the Red Army of the idea that soon they might have to fight was carried out by all available means of agitation, oral and printed propaganda. However, as on Hassan, a serious miscalculation was made: the initial political setting, which determined the content of propaganda among the personnel, turned out to be wrong. The Red Army men were asked to be inspired by the idea of a liberation mission: the Red Army, as is well known, acted against the Japanese on the territory of Mongolia. According to Mekhlis himself, this thesis turned out to be unsuccessful and misunderstood by many. I had to make an amendment, formulating the main slogan as follows: "Defending the borders of the Mongolian People's Republic, the Red Army defends the territory of the Soviet Union from Baikal to Vladivostok, prevents Japan from turning the Mongolian People's Republic into a springboard for a war against the USSR." All the forces at the disposal of the political agencies were thrown to explain the new slogan.

And after the Japanese were defeated, Mekhlis did not allow the political apparatus to fall into complacency. On August 29, in the wake of the events, he gave a categorical order to the political directorate of the 1st Army Group to use the victory to further strengthen faith in their forces: "At meetings, rallies, conversations ... we must debunk the Japanese generals - drivers and raise the role of our commanders and commissars - the true sons of the people.

As in most cases, Lev Zakharovich wrote the directive himself, and the style of the document clearly reflected this: "It would be nice to issue a leaflet - specific, without veal enthusiasm, but uplifting to the fighters ... Compose a short leaflet for the enemy - help his soldiers summarize".

At Khalkhin Gol, both Mekhlis himself and the political agencies led by him gained the first real experience in conducting counter-propaganda. Even before the decisive events in June 1939, Lev Zakharovich approved a program of 15-day collections of editorial offices and printing houses of newspapers in foreign languages. The leaders of the collections were tasked to familiarize the assigned staff with geography, economics

and the political situation of the country in whose language the newspaper will be published, with organization, tactics, weapons and political and moral

the state of the army of a potential enemy; to train editorial staff in methods of disintegrating the enemy's army and rear. On his initiative, by order of the People's Commissar of Defense, editorial offices and printing houses of newspapers in the languages of countries adjacent to the Soviet Union, as well as potential opponents, were formed in peacetime. One list of languages in which newspapers were supposed to be published is impressive - Japanese, Chinese, German, Polish, Finnish, Korean, Mongolian, Estonian, Latvian, Romanian, Turkish, Farsi.

But let us return directly to the area where two armies converged near the Mongolian river - the Soviet and the Japanese. Mekhlis arrived at Khalkhin Gol before the general offensive planned for the end of July. By his order, a group was already operating here to decompose enemy troops, led by regimental commissar M.I. Burtsev, a recent graduate of the Military-Political Academy. In essence, there was no real work: the group was stationed in the town of Tamtsak Bulak, 120 km from the front, had no translators, no printing house, no editorial office of the newspaper. Everything remained in Chita, 700 km from Mongolia.

As soon as the head of the PD found out about this, he immediately ordered that all three editorial offices of newspapers in Japanese, Mongolian and Chinese that were located there be transferred from Chita. Plus, he called from Moscow the then only sound broadcasting detachment, very powerful, deployed on five vehicles. The sound was heard for 8-10 km. Soon the detachment played a big role, firstly, in misinforming the enemy - defensive work was imitated while our units were preparing for the offensive; and secondly, already in the course of the offensive, in propagating the Japanese, the Manchus and the Barbuts.

The energy and diligence of the head of the PU often came into conflict with arrogance and inability to sober self-assessment. In a conversation with the author, retired Major General Burtsev recalled in this connection how Mekhlis himself wrote the text of the first four leaflets addressed to Japanese soldiers. "I immediately," the general said, "as a person more or less familiar with international propaganda, it became clear that he was too simplistic in his approach to the matter. He addressed the Japanese in the same way as he used to address our soldiers - in the same expressions, with

the same arguments, using an open class, revolutionary approach. In one of the leaflets, characterizing the Japanese emperor, he could not resist: he is a son of a bitch, an aggressor, threatening the Soviet Union, in a word, he is an enemy of the Japanese people.

When we showed the leaflet to the prisoners of war, they clutched their heads: how can you? The emperor cannot be wrong, he is a divine being. He is not to blame for the war, but the generals - they need foreign lands, campaigns, orders. The Emperor is not. From such leaflets, the Japanese, especially officers, only became angrier. Unfortunately, such miscalculations haunted Mekhlis both in the Finnish war and in the first months of the Great Patriotic War."

On September 17, 1939, units of the Red Army were ordered to cross the Soviet-Polish border, the so-called liberation campaign began in Western Ukraine and Western Belarus. Contrary to the assertions of official propaganda, the decision to undertake it was not impulsive, dictated by the course of events on the German-Polish front. At least, front-line units for conducting propaganda aimed at the population of Poland and Polish troops, on the instructions of Mekhlis, began to form at least 12 days before the start of hostilities. In the political departments of each of the two fronts - Ukrainian and Belorussian, departments were created for work among the population, enemy troops and prisoners of war, six editorial offices of newspapers in foreign languages and printing houses were deployed in wartime states.

On September 15, the heads of the political departments of the districts were instructed to urgently reprint in the district newspapers the leading article of the Pravda newspaper "On the Internal Causes of the Military Defeat of Poland" and, relying on it, to launch mass explanatory work.

Exceptional attention of the listeners had to be drawn to the position of the peasantry of the Ukrainian and Belarusian nationality in Poland, comparing it with the situation in the Soviet Ukrainian and Belarusian republics'. It is significant that Mekhlis gave this telegram not from Moscow, but from the headquarters of the Belarusian military district, where he arrived well in advance of the start of hostilities.

He was in the battle formations of the troops that entered the eastern provinces of Poland, and personally supervised the implementation of the ideological

'RGVA, f. 9, op. 40, d. 62, l. 258-260.

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logical work. The miscalculations made at first by him and the department headed by him were of the same kind as at Khalkhin Gol - neglect of the mentality of those for whom the propaganda was intended. The theses prepared in advance in the PU of the Red Army to justify the purpose of the campaign, sinned with a serious flaw: they contained a call to "beat the Polish lords", while not taking into account that in the Polish lands inhabited by Ukrainians, landlords and workers. Only on the sixth day after crossing the Soviet-Polish border, on September 22, 1939, did the head of the PU of the Red Army ask Stalin and Voroshilov for permission to make the necessary adjustments to the theses. This immediately gave its positive result.

Later, the head of the Red Army PU demanded promptly, by November 15-20, 1939, to summarize the material on the party political work carried out in the units. The various stages of the campaign were to be successively covered: direct combat operations, entry into the territory previously occupied by the German army, the transfer of the Lublin Voivodeship to the Germans, the deployment of our units on the lands that previously belonged to Poland.

For the first time, Lev Zakharovich became interested in the experience of indoctrination of the personnel of the enemy army. Having demanded from the military councils and heads of political departments of the fronts to give answers to a number of questions: what bodies and officials in the Polish army were engaged in ideological work, what kind of material and technical means were available in the barracks, what is the role of priests, is there a difference in the processing of personnel in peacetime and wartime and others, he stressed that "this is of great interest to us!".

As, of course, it was correctly noted in the directive of the head of the Red Army PU of September 29, 1939, summing up the political results of the events of August-September in the international arena, "The Ukrainian and Belarusian peoples greeted the Red Army as a liberating army." However, the document also contained disinformation: the responsibility for the war with Germany was assigned to "unlucky Polish politicians provoked by the warmongers of the world war" (meaning England and France), the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact was declared "completely justified"

'RGVA, f. 9, op. 40, d. 63, l. 160-162. 175-179.

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former", eliminating possible military clashes in Europe. It was ordered to widely explain the content of the Soviet-German agreements to the personnel, and additionally to the commissars and political agencies to ensure an organized and timely withdrawal of our units that had advanced beyond the border agreed with the Germans, to prevent even individual facts of looting, not to make provocative attacks. against Germany.

During the Polish campaign, Mekhlis and the system of political agencies he headed responded more quickly than before to changes in the situation, more actively used the experience of ideological work accumulated at Khalkhin Gol. Attention is also drawn to the decisiveness and uncompromisingness with which the head of the Political Directorate of the Red Army reacted to the facts of inconvenience.

an effective organization of accommodation, meals and cultural services for military personnel called up from the reserve to participate in the campaign. Having received such signals, on September 30, 1939, he ordered the commissars and heads of political agencies to carry out a complete check of the barracks, canteens, places of political work and cultural services and report the results by October 5. He warned his subordinates of the strictest personal responsibility, threatening to bring them to justice. A similar reaction on his part was followed by reports of cases of looting, arbitrariness, killings of civilians by some commanders, commissars and Red Army soldiers.

Compared to the campaign in the eastern regions of Poland, the Soviet-Finnish war became a much more serious test both for the Red Army as a whole and for its political apparatus. Stalin intended to test on the small country of Suomi (its population was about 3 million people compared to almost 200 million in the USSR) a model of pressure on a neighbor, which later succeeded in relation to the Baltic republics. He was echoed by the high-ranking entourage. Mekhlis, speaking just eight months before the opening of hostilities on the Karelian Isthmus at the 18th Party Congress, stated unequivocally: "If the Second World War turns its edge against the first socialist state in the world, then [should] transfer hostilities to the territory of the enemy, fulfill their international duties and multiply the number

lo of the Soviet republics.

By the beginning of the war, Soviet troops were combined into four armies with a total strength of 240,000 men, equipped with 1,915 guns, 1,131 tanks, and 967 aircraft. By February 1, 1940, the newly created North-Western Front already included 957.7 thousand people. He outnumbered the enemy in infantry by more than 2 times, in artillery - almost 3 times and absolutely - in tanks and aircraft. Nevertheless, the victory was given with great bloodshed.

Since the war with Finland, unlike previous military conflicts, lasted a long time, almost four months, Mekhlis managed to speak out about it more than once both publicly and in personal letters. "Cheerful and determined to beat the White Finns who started an anti-Soviet adventure," he told his family on December 3, 1939. The next day again: "The mood is wonderful. I just don't get enough sleep, as always, or even more." Lev Zakharovich constantly complained about lack of sleep, but "work in combat conditions inspires and rejuvenates. You don't know you're tired."

A month and a half passed, from near Leningrad, Mekhlis moved to Ukhta to the headquarters of the 11th Army. "I was deeply involved in the work, you don't see how the day has passed. You literally sleep for 2-3 hours and nothing", "The frosts are big. Yesterday I reached 35 degrees", despite this, "I feel good, my mood is excellent. One dream is to destroy the vile Finnish White Guard. We will achieve this. Victory is not far off."

The White Guard, however, was not going to give up. Lev Zakharovich obviously understood this himself, otherwise he would not have discussed plans for his family to visit him in a letter dated January 14, 1940. "Of course, I would like to see you both. But Lenya is studying, and mother is cold with us. Coming here to work? What about Lenya? It won't work, although I would like to."

The father does not get tired of instructing his son: "Do not waste a single day on useless deeds. Learn to be a useful person to your homeland. "I hope that soon you will be a member of the Komsomol. You are politically prepared enough to be a member of the Komsomol."

It turns out that eighteen years ago, the expressed desire to raise a "new man" from his son did not fade away. Similar, no doubt, to the one whom Lev Zakharovich could not forget in personal letters: "Soon the 60th birthday of Joseph Vissarionovich. How I would like to crown this day with the complete defeat of the Finnish White Guard. One more thing

letter: "Greetings. 21/XP sixtieth birthday of I.V. (abbreviation of Mekhlis. — Yu.R.) Celebrate it with your family."



The gift to the beloved leader did not come out. Scattered, poorly prepared strikes by units of the Leningrad Military District were successfully parried by the enemy. Difficult terrain, dense forests, rocky ridges, swamps that do not freeze in the most severe cold limited the widespread use of tanks and artillery. On the march, the equipment lagged behind the infantry. In addition, bitter frosts struck. Two or three well-armed, warmly dressed Finns could stop the movement of an entire company along a narrow forest road. Losses have risen sharply. Annoyed by the unexpected delay, the leader ordered the units that had recently passed through the west of Belarus and Ukraine to be transferred to the battle area. Transferred - without warm uniforms, without equipment. People who were not trained in actions in a mountainous and wooded area, who suffered severely from low temperatures, were out of action by the thousands.

But it was not in the habits of Soviet leaders to admit their own mistakes and crimes. For the adventurism and hat-throwing with which they got involved in the war, it was not they themselves who were responsible, but the "switchmen" appointed by them. Arrived after the "liberation campaign" directly from the Ukrainian steppes to the Ukhta direction, the 44th Rifle Division named after N. Shchors was immediately thrown into battle, although she was not provided with equipment, ammunition, food. The formation was not even allowed to concentrate on the starting line, and individual military units were thrown into battle as they arrived at the front line. As a result, in early January 1940, most of the division was surrounded and almost completely captured. The division commander, Colonel A.I. Vinogradov, the chief of staff and the head of the political department managed to break out of the encirclement. After an interrogation conducted personally by the head of the PU of the Red Army and the commander of the 9th Army, V.I. Chuikov, the command of the division was brought to court by a military tribunal and shot in front of the ranks of the soldiers who managed to avoid the encirclement.

And how were things on the site that was entrusted to our hero directly and directly? At least at first, it doesn't matter. The political slogan put forward with the opening of hostilities is that the Red Army is helping the Finnish people to get rid of

'RGVA, f. 40884, op. 1, d. 71, l. 2-4, 5, 7.

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"the yoke of capitalist exploitation" was perceived with incomprehension not only by soldiers and commanders of the Red Army, but also by the Finns. The latter, to the great displeasure of the inhabitants of the Kremlin, did not at all dream of establishing Soviet power in their country and accepted an unequal and therefore seemingly hopeless battle. Only at the beginning of February 1940, the directive of the Red Army PU finally stated the need to shift the emphasis in propaganda: cities, commissars, political instructors, propagandists and agitators, the army and divisional press either do not talk about it at all, or bring to the fore the question of the international obligations of the Red Army, of helping the Finnish people in their struggle against the oppression of the landlords and capitalists. . The new slogan, with an emphasis on the fact that the Red Army is waging a war for the security of Leningrad and the borders of the Soviet Union, for the destruction of the foothold of the war of the imperialists against the USSR, turned out to be, at least for Soviet military personnel, more understandable, although it was made on the basis of the tracing paper of the Khalkhingol slogan, but, of course, adjusted for the region. Using his abilities as the head of the Political Directorate of the Red Army and a member of the military council of the 7th Army, and remembering the experience of past battles, which meant a lot to him, Mekhlis led the work to decompose the enemy. In all the armies of the North-Western Front, departments were created to work among the troops and the population of the enemy, as well as the editorial offices of newspapers in Finnish; 40 million copies of leaflets were issued; each of the seven army newspapers had a circulation of 5,000 to 15,000 copies; sound broadcasting stations were involved, only in the 7th and 13th armies there were seven of them. "He swung widely," General Burtsev, already known to the reader, believes. "And it's not useless. Our appeal to the Finns to go into the forests, to save their lives, worked successfully. There were also those who voluntarily came over to our side. But then Mekhlis did not do, it seems to me, the main thing: he did not create a special department under the political administration of the Leningrad Military District, and then the North-Western Front, which would lead, coordinate and

directed this work. Then, we must give him his due, he made the necessary conclusions. Thanks to the efforts of Mehlis, we are going to war with Germany

already had a special apparatus: the 7th department (for work among the enemy troops) in the PUR and political departments of the military districts, 28 editorial offices of newspapers in foreign languages in the border districts.

Burtsev's resume is interesting. It confirms the conclusion that life, combat practice itself, prompted even such an inflexible nature as Mekhlis to correct himself.

Being at the forefront, the chief of the PU of the Red Army several times got into unpleasant bindings. In a conversation with the author, the writer Ortenberg, who was then editor of the newspaper of the 11th Army, Heroic Campaign, recalled how together with Mekhlis, being in one of the divisions, they ended up in the enemy's "bag". The army commissar of the 1st rank put the editorial staff on a truck - a former Leningrad taxi, gave several fighters for protection: "Break through." And they broke through the still fragile ice of the lake. And Mekhlis himself, together with the division commander, led her way out of the encirclement.

The "heroic campaign" did not miss a chance to work on the image of the head of the Political Directorate of the Red Army. More than once the newspaper told how Lev Zakharovich went on the attack in the Red Army line, broke through the enemy barriers. If exaggerations were allowed, then, knowing Mekhlis, it can be argued that they were hardly great: he never bowed to bullets.

In this sense, the writer Pyotr Pavlenko became a kind of chronicler. On December 17, 1939, he enthusiastically spoke about Lev Zakharovich's ingenuity in battle. A small convoy of an armored car, a car and a truck with ten Red Army soldiers on a narrow forest road ran into an ambush. A shootout ensued. In the meantime, a sledge convoy also approached from the rear. The Finns began to cut down the forest in order to take the column into the ring. How to be? Mekhlis, writes Pavlenko, proposed "a very ingenious maneuver, he ordered the cars and sleds to be turned in the opposite direction on their hands and, taking advantage of the darkness, in front of the enemy's eyes, manually roll them back several kilometers." |

December 26 - a new publication by Pavlenko. Mekhlis, seeing that ours could not bring down the Finnish barrier near the road, placed the fighters in a chain, got into the tank himself, and he, moving forward, opened fire from a cannon and a machine gun. The fighters followed, knocking the enemy from his position.

General A.F. also recalled a similar case. Khrenov, then head of the engineering troops of the LVO: "In one of his companies (the chief

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ka PU. - Yu.R) got the order to attack. He, without hesitation, became the head of the company and led it along. None of those around him managed to dissuade Mehlis from this step. It was very difficult to argue with Lev Zakharovich..."

When a leader of this rank goes like a simple fighter in an attacking chain, there is not much benefit, but there is no harm either. It is much worse when, with such ease, the same leader undertakes to carry out, knowing little about them, large-scale affairs affecting the interests of the army as a whole.

People's Commissar of the Navy Admiral N.G. Kuznetsov recalled how Mekhlis and another Deputy Commissar of Defense G.I. Kulik was summoned by his deputies L.M. Galler and I.S. Isakov and began to give them "very incompetent instructions", and they tried to put them into practice, bypassing the People's Commissar and the Main Naval Headquarters. "When I arrived at the headquarters of the Leningrad Military District," continues Kuznetsov, "I was also attacked by Mekhlis, a man of amazing energy, able to work day and night, but little versed in military affairs and not recognizing any statutory organization. Mekhlis I knew little then, but I firmly asked him not to give orders to the fleet without my knowledge. I had heated skirmishes with G.I. Kulik?

Meanwhile, the war had entered a decisive phase. Unable to immediately break the resistance of the Finns, the Soviet command was forced to take an operational pause. As mentioned above, the North-Western Front was created, which was headed by the commander of the 1st rank Timoshenko, and forces were built up. Combat operations resumed on February 11, 1940, went more successfully.

Mehlis wanted to witness the victory directly at the front. Being recalled to Moscow, on March 10, he sent a personal letter to Stalin, in which he asked "to give me the opportunity to work in the 9th Army until the end of the operation ... On the 54th rifle division. stubborn battles are going on ... I will not be a useless person on the spot. Such permission has been obtained.

In early March, after the Red Army had broken through the Mannerheim Line, the Finns sued for peace. Formally in the "winter war"

! Khrenov A.F. Bridges to victory. M., 1982. P. 47. 2 Kuznetsov N.G. The day before. M., 1969. S. 267-268.

defeated the Soviet Union. But the international resonance turned out to be, ultimately, not in favor of our country. It was then that Hitler concluded about Russia as a "colossus with feet of clay." And Stalin and his associates made it such by beheading the Red Army in previous years.

The statements of the leaders of the German military machine make it possible to assert that the future enemy punctually monitored the processes of weakening the power of the Soviet Armed Forces and accordingly planned his actions to prepare for aggression against the USSR. Thus, at a secret meeting of the leaders of the Wehrmacht at the end of November 1939, A. Hitler stated: "The fact remains that at the present time the combat effectiveness of the Russian armed forces is insignificant. For the next year or two, the current state will continue. According to the Chief of Staff of the Supreme High Command of the Wehrmacht, V. Keitel, the Fuhrer in general "constantly proceeded from the fact that... Stalin destroyed in 1937 the entire first echelon of the highest military commanders, and capable minds among those who came to their place so far No".

The key role of Mekhlis in the implementation of repressions of the command and political staff of the Red Army, in our opinion, is indisputable. Judging by his actions, for this person the problem of whether or not to participate in the destruction of military personnel did not exist in principle. By the end of the 1930s, the brutal personnel selection carried out by the leader left in his entourage only those who were ready to fulfill any mission, the most unjust order. Following this deeply immoral logic of survival in the Stalinist elite, Mekhlis inflicted irreparable damage on the Red Army.

## Chapter 5

### A YEAR BEFORE THE WAR

#### IS IT IMPOSSIBLE TO PUSH OFFICER?

The last pre-war year turned out to be full of serious changes for Mehliis in his political career.

Although the war with Finland was presented by official propaganda as victorious, the weakness of the Red Army became obvious even to the most

incurable optimists in the party-state elite. For the first time in 15 years at the head of the People's Commissariat of Defense, Marshal Voroshilov had to keep a really serious report. As Marshal Zhukov recalled in a conversation with Konstantin Simonov, the leader, speaking with him in the spring of 1940 about the results of the Finnish war, spoke irritably about the people's commissar: "He boasted, assured, claimed that we would respond to a blow with a triple blow. Everything is fine, everything is in order, everything is ready, Comrade Stalin, but it turned out ... "

The plenum of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks, held on March 28, 1940, heard Voroshilov's report, subjecting him to ruthless, but — admittedly — justified criticism. The speaker repented that "neither I,

People's Commissar for Defense, neither the General Staff nor the command of the Leningrad Military District at first had no idea of all the features and difficulties associated with this war, "and" the military department approached the preparations for the war in Finland not seriously enough!

Stalin's irritation was so great that the Politburo of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks remembered the failures of the military leadership even two years later, considering the question "On the work of Voroshilov K.E." on April 1, 1942: "War with Finland in 1939-1940. revealed great trouble and backwardness in the leadership of NPOs. During this war, the unpreparedness of NPOs to ensure the successful development of military operations became clear. The Red Army did not have mortars and machine guns, there was no correct accounting of aircraft and tanks, there were no necessary winter clothes for the troops, the troops did not have food concentrates. A great neglect was revealed in the work of such important NPO departments as the Main Artillery Directorate, the Combat Training Directorate, the Air Force Directorate, the low level of organization of work in military educational institutions, etc.

All this was reflected in the prolongation of the war and led to unnecessary casualties. Tov. Voroshilov, being at that time the people's commissar of defense, was forced to admit at the plenum of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks at the end of March 1940 the revealed inconsistency of his leadership of the NPO.

Military Historical Journal, 1993, No. 4, p. 11. 2 Military Historical Journal, 1999, No. 4, p. 93.

Mekhlis tried to take advantage of the situation. Judging by some signs (which will be discussed below), he himself was not averse to taking the chair of the people's commissar. Rising to the podium of the plenum, the head of the PD of the Red Army, as General of the Army Khrulev recalled, said: "Voroshilov cannot simply leave his post, he must be severely punished ... At least arrested."

But even Stalin did not allow his old favorite to take a very strong swing at the failed People's Commissar, whom the Secretary General had favored no less before. He got up from his seat, went to the podium and, pushing the head of the PD, said: "Here Mekhlis delivered a hysterical speech. For the first time in my life I meet such a people's commissar who would criticize his activities with such frankness and sharpness. But, on the other hand, if Mekhlis considers this unsatisfactory, then I can start telling you about Mekhlis, what he is, and then there will be no wet place left from him!

But the leader only threatened, but did not tell. And in relation to Voroshilov, he limited himself to removing him from his post, appointing Marshal S.K. Timoshenko. Released from the leadership of the military department, Kliment Efremovich remained chairman of the Main Military Council, and soon became deputy head of government. Punished, nothing to say.

The leader, who, as is known, proclaimed the slogan "Cadres decide everything!", could not but understand the direct connection between repressions and the low level of training of the commanding and commanding staff. But he also could not admit that with his own hands and the hands of his relatives he ruined the flower of the army. At a meeting of the commanding staff, convened by the Central Committee in April 1940 specifically to discuss the experience of hostilities against Finland, he threw a "bone" to those who listened to him, explaining that our commanding staff "was prevented, in my opinion, by the cult of tradition and the experience of civilian war." He urged "to peck at the cult of admiration for the experience of the civil war", to overcome the dominance of its participants, "who cannot give way to young cadres".

But there was no longer any "dominance" in sight, the overwhelming majority of cadres forever passed, as cynically expressed at the top, into

| Kumanev GA. Next to Stalin: candid evidence. M., 1999. S. 352.

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"Department of the People's Commissar of Internal Affairs did not occupy certain positions," that is, she was repressed.

Both Voroshilov and Mekhlis were, in fact, the main conductors in the Armed Forces of the line of beating up cadres. In this regard, there were no claims against them from Stalin, and therefore his dissatisfaction, demonstrated at the plenum of the Central Committee, was reduced to a formula long known to the people: the dear ones scold - they only amuse themselves.

If some of the readers find this conclusion of the author too bold, here are some more facts. At the above-mentioned April meeting of the leadership of the Armed Forces, the leader made a remark to Mekhlis. The reason was the remark of the Colonel of the Intelligence Directorate of the General Staff Khadzhi Umar Mamsurov (in the future - Colonel General, Deputy Head of the GRU), who stated that the 9th Army was not led by Commander V.I. Chuikov, commander of the army, and member of the Military Council of the army, Mekhlis. The latter, acting as a member of the Armed Forces of the army, but being a representative of the center and having broad powers, tried to replace the commander of the army and at the same time did not bear any responsibility for the outcome of military operations. "It seems to me," Mamsurov said with the necessary degree of caution, since he was treading on thin ice, "that such a situation, when a deputy commissar was appointed a member of the military council of the army, was a little wrong position and it was reflected in the role of the commander ... In general, at the army headquarters they said that the deputy [commissar] of the people's commissar is the boss here, and the commander cannot solve problems.

Having information about this from other sources, Stalin, according to the memoirs of Admiral N.G. Kuznetsov, once said to the head of the Red Army PD: "There, on the spot, you had the habit of putting the commander in your pocket and disposing of him as you please." And he "took this reproach rather as praise."

That's right - as a praise, as an encouragement deliberately stern teacher beloved student. For even the Great Patriotic War, as the reader will see later, for a very long time could not force Lev Zakharovich to abandon incompetent interference in

' Winter War 1939-1940. In 2 books. Book. 2. M., 1998. S. 244. ? Kuznetsov N.G. The day before. S. 268.

activities of the commanders, accompanied by a huge strong-willed pressure and arrogance. Well, the one who could put a limit to this militant incompetence, objected to it more for appearance than in essence. It is quite obvious that in the eyes of Stalin, these "shortcomings" of Mekhlis faded into the shadows of the "virtues" that were much more in demand even during the period of repression.

An episode of the same April meeting in the Kremlin, important for our narrative, was also cited by Admiral I.S. Isakov (as narrated by Konstantin Simonov): "Mekhlis crawled out several times with comments, then with a remark, after which Stalin suddenly said:

"And Mekhlis is generally a fanatic, he should not be allowed near the army.

I remember," the admiral recalled, "then I was surprised that, despite these words, Mekhlis continued to behave at this meeting as if nothing had happened and more than once got out with his remarks." The leader reacted calmly to this.

It is easy to judge others, but the time has come to report on your own deeds. The state of affairs in the field of ideological work was critically reviewed at a meeting held on May 13, 1940 under the leadership of the newly appointed People's Commissar for Defense, Marshal Timoshenko, with the participation of senior officials of the Red Army. The pathos of the main report delivered by Mekhlis consisted in a certain sobering up from the capricious mood under the influence of the results of the Soviet-Finnish war. The head of the PU of the Red Army stated "a lag in the field of military ideology", which "we, the military detachment of the Bolshevik Party, can no longer endure the klitsa."

The speaker chose as the starting point of criticism what Stalin said at the April meeting in the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks, and then at a meeting of the commission of the Main Military Council - the demand to put an end to the cult of the experience of the Civil War, to "peck" it, because this cult "perpetuates our backwardness "!.

Lev Zakharovich spoke out sharply against the widespread assertion, bordering on dangerous arrogance, about the invincibility of the Red Army. "History knows no invincible armies...", the speaker said. - The army, of course, needs to be brought up

G I.V. Stalin: "Radically reshape our military ideology" // Military Historical Journal, 2001, No. 3. P. 96.

to make her feel confident in her abilities. The army must be instilled with the spirit of confidence (Italics Mekhlis. - Yu.R.) in its power, but not in the sense of boasting. For arrogance and neglect of military art, he stressed, on the Karelian Isthmus had to "pay with excess blood."

Among the false attitudes in the matter of education and propaganda in the Red Army, in addition to putting forward slogans about its invincibility, about the army of heroes, he named: incorrect coverage of international tasks ("out of time, without regard to conditions and without regard to who is appealed to") ; scholasticism, inability to conduct propaganda and give slogans based on a specific situation; unsatisfactory organization of the study of the armies of potential adversaries and possible theaters of military operations; neglect of military scientific work.

The speaker considered it necessary to pay special attention to how poorly military history, especially Russian, is being studied: "We have an incorrect slander of the old army, and meanwhile, we had such wonderful generals of the tsarist army as SUVOROV, KUTUZOV, BAGRATION (emphasis added by Mekhlis - Yu.R.), who will always remain in the memory of the people as great Russian commanders and who are honored by the Red Army, which inherited the best military traditions of the Russian soldier.

The shifts will seem even more striking if we recall that just two years ago, in 1938, the PU of the Red Army put forward as examples the heroes of the Civil War V.I. Chapaeva, N.A. Shchors, G.I. Kotovsky, A.Ya. Parkhomenko, S.G. Lazo. Now, as we see, Mekhlis propagandized the generals of the Russian Empire.'

By the way, even later, during the years of the Great Patriotic War, he not only was not too lazy to repeat calls to turn to the glorious pages of pre-revolutionary military history, but also did a lot for their implementation.

Illustrating the proposition that history is the best teacher, the speaker recalled: in two centuries, Russia fought four times in the Finnish theater of operations, and successfully, but this, in fact, remained unknown to the command staff of the Red Army. Under the bushel in the General Staff was experience, albeit small,

'RGVA, f. 9, op. 36, d. 335, l. 114, 151.

military operations near Lake Khasan, on the Khalkhin-Gol River, as well as a campaign in Western Ukraine and Western Belarus. The materials of the Intelligence Directorate, summarizing the experience of the wars in Abyssinia, in Spain, and the German-Polish war, were too classified, boring and unknown to the general reader.

The head of the PU cannot be denied a certain courage and innovation. Criticizing the organization of party political work in the Red Army, he expressed an idea that under other conditions would have seemed at least controversial, and in the worst case, seditious: "Propaganda in the Red Army should not be limited only to the theory and history of the Bolshevik Party. It was a mistake that we were carried away only by the propaganda of the "Short Course in the History of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks" and forgot the propaganda that obliges us to respond to everything."

In order to raise the level of military ideology and military science to the requirements of modern warfare, Mekhlis proposed (and these proposals were accepted by the participants in the meeting): to achieve an end to the "talk" about the invincibility of the Red Army, to fight in every possible way against arrogance, superficiality, and hatred; to improve the military culture of command personnel, to recognize

as the basis of the foundations of their education, a deep study of the history of the CPSU (b), military history, the development of military literature; to instill in commanders honor and dignity, love for military affairs and their unit, to develop organization and exactingness, to encourage continuous improvement of their knowledge; to build the entire study and life of the army in relation to the conditions of the combat situation, to engage in the terrain, in different weather, to accustom personnel to great physical exertion; by all means to instill in the personnel a "militant spirit", to educate them on the positive examples of the history of the Russian army and its traditions.

It was also proposed to create an authoritative department for the study of war experience within the General Staff system, create a Military Scientific Society with branches in the centers of the largest military districts, strengthen the apparatus of the Military Publishing House and the Krasnaya Zvezda newspaper, and strengthen the publication of translated literature. It was especially proposed to provide conditions for free discussion in the pages of military journals of the most important issues of military theory.

rii, for which they were removed from the neck, meaning belonging to an NGO and turning them into officialdom'.

The measures proposed by the head of the Red Army PU for a radical restructuring of the process of political education of personnel sounded, no doubt, topical, they were long overdue. However, the spirit of benevolence took root so deeply that even the cruel lessons of the "winter war" could not completely eradicate it.

This was shown by the verification of the implementation of the order of the new people's commissar of defense on combat and political training in the summer period of training in 1940, carried out by the Political Directorate. On May 30, Mekhlis sent a detailed directive to the troops, in which he stated that the People's Commissar's order had not yet become a reference book for the command and political staff. The head of the PU of the Red Army demanded that the commissars and political agencies, party and Komsomol organizations "with Bolshevik perseverance" turn to the issues of combat training, strengthening military discipline and improving educational work with personnel. To suppress the slightest attempt to waste training hours and conduct political studies and all kinds of meetings at the expense of the time when combat training should take place. Expand socialist competition for excellent mastery of one's military specialty. Make a sharp turn in strengthening military discipline. A special demand was made to commissars and political workers to master military affairs on an equal footing with commanders, otherwise sooner or later they would fall "out of the cart of leading work."

The organization of combat training in the troops caused concern. A painful impression on Mekhlis was made by an inspection trip to the Kiev Special Military District. Having checked the air defense of Kiev and the Kiev fortified area, he reported to Stalin and Voroshilov, as chairman of the Main Military Council: in parts of the 44th Infantry Division there is no real concern for the life and food of personnel, the assigned staff of equipment does not know, the equipment of bunkers bears a huge imprint of "wrecking activity". "I am deeply convinced that we will not have to resort to this during the war."

! "False attitudes in education and propaganda". Report of the Head of the Political Directorate of the Red Army L.Z. Mekhlis on the military ideology of 1940 // Historical Archive, 1997, No. 5-6. pp. 95-106.

the fortified area," reported Mekhlis, who turned out to be an unimportant seer, "but still ... I strongly support that all defects be eliminated in one or two years."

Lev Zakharovich promised negligent leaders the prospect of "falling out of the cart." However, he soon found himself in this position. In accordance with the established political tradition, the entire top of the military department left together with the former people's commissar of defense. People's Commissar of Defense Voroshilov was replaced by Timoshenko, Chief of the General Staff Marshal Shaposhnikov

- Army General K.A. Meretskov, and Mekhlisa (though a little later - in September 1940) - army commissar of the 2nd rank A.I. Zaporozhets.

On the eve of his departure from the military department, Mekhlis had a chance to go through an unpleasant reorganization for him. On August 12, 1940, by decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, the institution of military commissars was abolished, and their place was taken by deputy commanders (chiefs) for political affairs. The institute of commissars was Lev Zakharovich's favorite brainchild; by nature, from the very beginning of the Civil War, he remained a commissar - with distrust of the commander never completely overcome, with disdain for subordination, with an exaggerated conviction that ideological loyalty is always more important than professional training. And although, following the instructions from above, he diligently promoted the transition to unity of command, he could not but regret the abolition of the institution of military commissars.

Let's try to evaluate his almost three-year leadership of the Red Army PU. Let us bear in mind that subjective views (his own and the views, assessments of his superiors, taking into account the ideas of those years) and objective (from the point of view of the real interests of the army and the country) are possible here, which do not always coincide.

In May 1940, Mekhlis reported to the Central Committee on the work of a department subordinate to him (the reader already knows about this). The report was, on the whole, critical, but nevertheless painted in a tone favorable to its author: "the problem of political personnel has been basically resolved", "party organizations have grown", "the army Komsomol has literally been raised to the shield", "in the army a sharp turning point, etc.

Much more stringent wording contains the act signed on November 14 of the same year on the acceptance of cases of the Main Directorate of Political Affairs.

of propaganda (as the Political Administration of the Red Army began to be called) by his new chief Zaporozhets. Here are just a few of them. Accounting for the political composition is not properly established, it is studied formally, only according to documents. 570 people from its nomenclature were not submitted for approval to the Central Committee. The general educational level of the political staff is low: only 6.2 percent have a higher education, and 71.5 percent have a lower secondary education. Among the deputy commanders of units and formations for political affairs, this percentage is even higher - 76.9. At the same time, their professional experience is very limited: about half of the political workers of the Red Army have been such for less than two years. More than half of the political workers in the reserve (75.4 out of 124.1 thousand people) need training and retraining.

Many shortcomings were noted in organizational-party work. The instructions of the Central Committee on the creation of full-blooded party organizations in the company level were not carried out. Not reduced, but increased the number of candidates for party members with overdue experience: from almost 65 thousand people to | | January 1940 their number to | July exceeded 95 thousand. As of October 1, more than 10,000 party cards and 10,000 candidate cards had not been issued.

Knowing the procedure for compiling and approving such documents as the act of acceptance and transfer of the people's commissariat, one can definitely say that it appeared in its final form only after passing through the hands of Stalin. Thus, even from the point of view of the then top political leadership, the main parameters in the activities of the PU of the Red Army and its chief were not met.

All the more so, ordinary contemporaries, all the people who paid with the lives of millions of their sons in the war that began very soon for the crimes of the Stalinist elite, for the extermination of the best military personnel, for the catastrophic weakening of the country's combat readiness on the eve of fascist

invasion.

But what was before this "father of nations", who inspired mass repressions in the name of achieving absolute autocracy and eliminating even visible opposition to his regime. Not



It is doubtful that it was precisely by the activity in eliminating the "enemies of the people" that he judged Mehlis.

TsAMO, f. 32, op. 11309, d. 15, l. 52-68.

Stalin not only removed him from the army for a while, but immediately elevated him, appointing him in September 1940 People's Commissar of State Control of the USSR, that is, a member of the government, which in May 1941 he headed himself.

True, this was presented as concern for the military department (paradoxically, the departure of Stalin's protégé was indeed a boon for the army, though not at all in the sense that the leader officially gave it). Army General Khrulev recalled how Mekhlis clung to his old position and persuaded the new people's commissar Timoshenko to intercede for him before Stalin. To which the leader reacted: "Here is a naive person! They want to help him, but he does not understand this; he wants us to leave him Mehlis. But three months will pass, and Mekhlis will push him. Mehlis himself wants to be a military people's commissar."

It seems that this tirade should not mislead us, it is seen as an element of the same Stalinist game for the public (and in the personal secretariat, as the reader remembers, Stalin "could not" cope with his obstinate assistant, and in the Finnish war there was no reason for that). Now, it turns out, there is a danger of an unauthorized "breakthrough" of the head of the PU into the chair of the people's commissar of defense, which Stalin is also unable to fight otherwise than by elevating his protégé... be surprised.

## DESIGNER OF THE STATE CONTROL SYSTEM

The idea of creating (more precisely, recreating the one that existed in the early years of Soviet power) a full-fledged state body that controls the expenditure of material and financial resources, as well as checks the implementation of the main decisions of the government, the leader expressed at a meeting of the Politburo of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks on May 26, 1940 of the year. In accordance with the adopted resolution, the formation of a new People's Commissariat was envisaged on the basis of the existing control bodies - the Commission of Soviet Control and the Main Military Control Committee of Defense under the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR. On September 6, the Politburo approved the text of the decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR on the creation of the Commissariat and adopted

decision to appoint Mekhlis People's Commissar of State Control of the USSR and Deputy Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR".

For almost three decades that have passed by 1940 after Lev Zakharovich worked in the People's Commissariat of the Workers' and Peasants' Inspectorate of the RSFSR, the system of state control has experienced many changes. Their vector, especially after 1934, when the joint body - the Central Control Commission - RKI (Central Control Commission - Workers' and Peasants' Inspectorate) was abolished and was replaced by the Commission of Soviet Control under the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR and the Party Control Commission under the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party (b) became clear fairly quickly. It consisted in replacing the former system of party-state control with a bureaucratic system cut off from the broad masses.

In the new post, the official and political position of Mehlis was significantly strengthened. After becoming People's Commissar and entering the government, he occupied a higher niche in the hierarchy of the state bureaucracy. And Stalin attached great importance to state control itself, as an important lever of pressure on the state apparatus in conditions when it was considered necessary to stop mass repressions. This can already be seen from the fact that the NKGK was raised above the rest of the people's commissariats, having received the right to control them.

It was given the status of a union-republican people's commissariat, which was called upon to carry out: daily control over the accounting, storage and expenditure of funds and material assets at the disposal of state, cooperative and other

public organizations; the production of planned and unannounced audits, and the people's commissar was given the right to independently, without agreement with the government, determine what and where inspections and audits to conduct; preparation of conclusions for the government of the USSR on the execution of the state budget; verification of the execution of decisions and orders of the government, both on his behalf and at the discretion of the people's commissar of state control.

Unprecedented were the rights granted to the People's Commissariat of State Control in the person of its head: to give mandatory for all People's Commissariats, main departments and committees under the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR and their local bodies, as well as for all other state and public

'RGASPI, f. 17, op. 3, d. 1026, l. 13, 18, 35; house 1027, l. 35.

directives of state organizations on the provision of reports and explanations by them on issues within the competence of the NCGC; require relevant managers to eliminate identified deficiencies; impose disciplinary sanctions on the guilty, remove them from office, make monetary accruals on them, and in case of detection of criminal acts, bring them to justice.

The situation in which the new People's Commissariat had to operate was not easy. The country, catching up with the leading Western countries, in the face of increasing international tension, but on September 1, 1939, taking into account the factor of the outbreak of the world war, was feverishly increasing production, primarily in the defense industries. Since June 1940, the decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR came into effect on the transition to an eight-hour working day and the prohibition of unauthorized leaving of workers and employees from enterprises. Huge financial flows were redistributed in favor of defense; in 1941, expenditures for these purposes amounted to more than 43 percent of the state budget. The government, the Defense Committee under the Council of People's Commissars adopted one after another resolutions on the construction and reconstruction of aircraft and aircraft engine plants, shipyards, factories for the production of armored tanks and artillery equipment.

The economic system created in the USSR in the 1930s, as a whole, successfully coped with the tasks of an extensive increase in production, but in extreme conditions it turned out to be little receptive to innovation, to new forms of organization of production, to the approval of such indicators of social labor as efficiency, productivity, rationality. In order to overcome the crisis of the administrative-command system indirectly fixed by the 18th All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks conference (January-February 1941), the country's leadership chose the usual path - a feverish "improvement" of the management system through tightening control, further strengthening of centralism, and the introduction of detailed accountability. Even weak sprouts of cost accounting, material incentives, and the operational independence of enterprises were liquidated.

The Politburo of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks sought to launch the mechanism of state control as soon as possible. On September 29, 1940, it instructed

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Mekhlis, who was present at the meeting, within 10 days to submit for approval the work plan of the NKGK for 1940 and 1941. It was especially stipulated that only the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks and the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR could give current orders to the people's commissariat.

Here, the new people's commissar also received the first task by telegram from the secretary of the Sverdlovsk regional party committee V.M. Andrianov, who reported on the unsatisfactory supply of ferrous and non-ferrous metals to the factories of the People's Commissariat of Ammunition. The People's Commissar of State Control, together with the People's Commissar of Internal Affairs, Beria, was instructed to "check the apparatus of the People's Commissariat of Ammunition, taking into account the exchange of opinions" (so in the document. - Yu.R.).

If it is right to call Stalin the ideologist of state control, then Mekhlis was the true designer of the system and mechanism of such control. He set about creating

of the department entrusted to him energetically, without hesitation, with an understanding of the significance of the height to which he was exalted. It is unlikely that he regretted that he parted with the People's Commissariat of Defense.

First of all, it was necessary to solve a complex of organizational issues - to form a capable team both in the center and in the field, plan the work and organize it practically. Lev Zakharovich began with personnel. By November, the Politburo of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks approved the composition of the Board of the People's Commissariat proposed by Mekhlis and Malenkov. The staffs of the central office of the People's Commissariat of the USSR were approved, which included the people's commissar and eight of his deputies, the actual working apparatus of the people's commissariat, the apparatus of chief controllers for other people's commissariats and departments - a total of 1 thousand people.

Staffing was not only at the expense of the previously abolished control bodies. Many sources were used — suitable specialists were requested from the offices of other people's commissariats and from production, selected from among university graduates, and called to Moscow from the field. He was allowed to take a certain number of workers from the military department: by the end of February 1941, about 130 military personnel worked in the central office of the NKVD alone. In addition, he achieved the decision of the Central Committee of the party, obliging the leadership of the People's Commissariats of Defense and the Navy to provide him with the necessary personnel for appointment as controllers in military districts, armies, divisions and

large warehouses.

Mekhlis organized work on the urgent formation of people's commissariats of state control of the union republics and the selection of candidates for people's commissars. The Politburo of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks promptly approved 3.I. Ali-Zade (Azerbaijan SSR), A.A. Bunyatyan (Armenian SSR), A.Kh. Butko (Moldavian SSR), I.F. Voloshin (Belarusian SSR), A.K. Koishigulova (Kazakh SSR). Later, the appointments of people's commissars were made in other union republics as well.

The People's Commissar for State Control of the USSR showed the necessary exactingness and agreed with far from every proposal of the republican party bodies. So, Koishigulov's candidacy was accepted by him on the condition that the People's Commissar of State Control of Kazakhstan would be given an intelligent, knowledgeable deputy. And the candidacy of K. Mukumbaev, head of the Bukhara regional department of the NKVD, proposed by the Central Committee of the Communist Party (b) of Uzbekistan for the post of republican people's commissar, was completely rejected. "I believe that, in terms of his general culture and literacy, he will not be able to cope with the work of the People's Commissar of State Control," Mekhlis summed up in a letter to Molotov after a personal conversation with the candidate.

At the same time, the states of the people's commissariats of the Union republics were formed. Together with the apparatus of the allied people's commissariat, a whole army of controllers was subordinated to Mekhlis - more than 4.5 thousand people. Human.

In solving personnel issues, the most difficult link was the selection of middle managers and ordinary employees. Lev Zakharovich demanded from his deputies, from the chief controllers, to evaluate people, first of all, by their political qualities. Despite the fact that by this time the wave of mass repressions had subsided, the recent atmosphere of general suspicion, the mass revelation of facts of "sabotage" in literally all sectors of the national economy, in all spheres of life, had a strong effect. As a result, many candidates were rejected even when there were seemingly strong arguments in favor of the appointment.

for the position.

Strictly following the political face of his subordinates, the people's commissar paid a lot of attention to their business qualities, warned the controllers against the thoughtless passion for the possibility of punishing, demanded that they deal with the identified violations without haste.

' GARF, f. 8300, op. 1, d. 4, l. 61.

sti, with the participation of the audited officials. With those who could not stand these requirements, parted. So, in December 1940, G.Ya. Udras. During an inspection of the state of trade and public catering at defense industry plants, carried out on behalf of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks, he showed dishonesty and bias.

Mekhlis showed a clear understanding that only a qualified worker can perform quality control functions. Taking into account the insufficiently high educational level of the supervisory staff, as well as the fact that many came to this work from other fields of activity, the people's commissar repeatedly gave instructions on additional education for subordinates. One of his first orders, he approved the procedure for the employees of the People's Commissariat to study the basics of accounting, economics and finance. After a few months, it was deemed necessary to raise the level of such studies. For senior controllers, controllers and their assistants, a minimum technical minimum was introduced with the subsequent passing of tests in the basics of accounting, finance, credit and their planning, the basics of economic and criminal law and other disciplines.

Despite considerable efforts, filling vacancies has always been difficult. There were not enough leaders (chief inspectors and their deputies), there was a shortage of the most massive category of specialists - controllers, for a long time it was not possible to staff a group of auditors who were directly attached to the people's commissar to perform operational tasks. On | On January 1942, the central apparatus was filled by only 60 percent (despite the fact that only 141 people were drafted into the army at the start of the war), and the staffing of the control staff was even lower - from 40 to 60 percent.

Mekhlis was especially alarmed, and not without reason, by the state of affairs with personnel in the union republics, especially in those that had only recently acquired such a status. As the head of the organizational and instructor department of the NKKG of the USSR, Ortenberg, who made an inspection trip to the Baltic republics in March 1941, reported to him, in the local people's commissariats of state control, in fact, collapse reigned. Estonia and Lithuania have not implemented

not a single audit or inspection, although they were carried out in Latvia, they touched upon minor problems in the non-productive sphere. The people's commissars were unsuitable for the performance of their functions. The states were littered with people from the bourgeois parties, former officers of the old army, kulaks.

The Allied People's Commissar decided to urgently select experienced controllers for permanent work in the people's commissariats of state control of the Baltic republics, send a group there to conduct joint inspections and audits, and demanded from the people's commissars to resolutely reorganize the work, first of all, by taking measures to urgently clear the apparatus of people's commissariats from anti-Soviet and hostile elements.

The People's Commissar did not wait until the process of formation of teams subordinate to him was completed, but immediately oriented his subordinates to practical checks and revisions. At first, however, they were largely random in nature, covering mainly the metropolitan region, concerned local issues, for example, the squandering of leather goods in the system of the People's Commissariat of Light Industry of the RSFSR and the subordinated factory "Paris commissioning of an imported rolling mill at the Moscow Institute of Steel. Stalin, illegal receipt of funds for food subsidies by the director of the Moscow Trust of Vegetable State Farms I.I. Yanov, overscheduled downtime of wagons at the Gigant cement plant of the People's Commissariat of Building Materials of the USSR.

Mekhlis quickly caught on to this trend and tried to reverse it. Responding in November 1940 to the act of audit presented to him, which was carried out in the financial department of the People's Commissariat of State Farms of the USSR and revealed the widespread practice of concluding contracts with private individuals for the performance of various kinds of work, he agreed with the conclusion of the auditors that this was a loophole for obtaining

unearned income. The People's Commissar of State Control instructed to conduct a similar audit at once in 10-15 people's commissariats, to summarize the results and, on their basis, prepare a draft government decree in order to give the fight against embezzlement of funds carried out under the guise of labor agreements an all-Union scale.

A similar pattern of unsatisfactory performance of supervisory work was also revealed in some Union republics, in particular, in Kazakhstan. Local sentinels preferred to check

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to take what was closer and simpler - an art gallery, a hunting inspection, while the main branch of the economy of the republic - animal husbandry - remained out of their field of vision. The activities of the People's Commissariats of State Control of the Azerbaijan, Uzbek, and Tajik SSRs also caused a lot of criticism. Revealing the most characteristic shortcomings in his orders, the allied people's commissar warned the republican people's commissars about their special responsibility for the accuracy and validity of the audit and inspection materials submitted to Moscow.

The most important direction was control over the implementation of government decisions on defense issues. Lev Zakharovich built this work, both following the specific instructions of the directive bodies, and on his own initiative. For example, on October 29, 1940, the Politburo instructed the People's Commissariat to check how the resolution of the Council of Ministers of the USSR and the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks of October 19 of the same year "On the plan for military shipbuilding for 1941", as well as the resolution of the Defense Committee on the construction special workshops at the Starokramatorsk and Novokramatorsk plants, which produced turrets and artillery systems for warships. By December 15, following this instruction, Mekhlis organized seven checks in the People's Commissariat of the shipbuilding industry, eight - construction, five - heavy engineering.

A number of inspections were organized on an initiative basis. This concerned, in particular, the decision of the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR and the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks dated | October 1940 "On speeding up the construction of the Verkhne-Svirskaya hydroelectric power station." By the nature of the measures taken, one can judge the fundamental approaches of the People's Commissar of State Control. First of all, a special inspector from the Office of the Chief Inspector for the People's Commissariat of Power Plants was assigned to the construction. The next measure was taken in view of the fact that the main equipment for Svirstroy was to be manufactured in Leningrad. Kryuchikhin, the NKGK representative for this city, was entrusted with control over the timely execution of orders for equipment and its delivery. Finally, the people's commissariat developed a plan for monitoring the implementation of this resolution with a listing of specific tasks for the chief inspectors for 16 people's commissariats'.

' GARF, f. 8300, op. 1, d. 2, l. 143, 144-149.

The Head of the State Audit Office organized an audit of the implementation of those resolutions for which there were already practical results. This applies, first of all, to the resolution of the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR and the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks dated January 28, 1940 on the demurrage of cars on the sidings of industrial enterprises (Mekhlis instructed to study this issue as part of all audits and inspections, regardless of the main topics, in addition, the NKGK specifically checked how the USSR Prosecutor's Office and the People's Commissariat of Justice reacted to these downtime, and in fact convicted them of the toothlessness of the measures taken); a decree of February 2, 1940 on measures for the collection, processing and use of ferrous scrap metal waste (the heads of the proven Moskabel, Elektrosila and Sevkabel plants were severely punished for failing to fulfill the plan for the delivery of scrap and the release of metal waste to the side); Decrees of the Central Executive Committee and Council of People's Commissars of the USSR of 1930 on the rules for classifying large industrial centers as privileged (according to the people's commissar, which he stated in a letter to Stalin and Molotov, these rules were outdated and created opportunities for squandering state funds; therefore, he asked to instruct the All-Union Central Council of Trade Unions and the People's Commissariat of Justice to urgently prepare a draft decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR on benefits for pers

remote areas, providing for the maximum reduction of benefits that were in effect before) and others.

In general, during the first half of 1941, about 400 audits and inspections were carried out, primarily in those sectors of the national economy on which the country's readiness for defense directly depended. This approach, asserted under the direct pressure of Mekhlis, became more and more decisive. It favorably differed from the largely random in address, small in scale and shallow in terms of conclusions audits and inspections, from which drug  
mat started its activity.

A typical example is a continuous inspection of the subdivisions of the Glavneftesbyt of the People's Commissariat of the Oil Industry. At the same time, and from the point of view of one issue - accounting, storage and distribution of petroleum products - it covered 18 republican and regional offices and individual large oil depots from Moldova to Tajikistan. Egregious violations of the established order were revealed: neglect of accounting, illegal sale of oil products to the "side", shortages and additions. Vacation only

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fuel without funds and in excess of funds, which was strictly forbidden, amounted to more than 7.6 thousand tons for the checked divisions of the head office. Mekhlis, by his orders, removed from office and brought to justice several dozen employees of the industry, made money  
odds.

By building up administrative "muscles", the People's Commissar for State Control achieved the approval in the government of the rules for making monetary charges against officials who caused damage to the state. Decree of the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR of May 13, 1941 giving the right to issue orders to Fr. the production of such odds was given only to him, the union people's commissar, and the people's commissars of the union republics. The amounts recovered - in the amount of the damage caused, but not more than three months' wages of the offending official - were contributed to the income of the union budget

From the very beginning, Mekhlis considered it necessary to plant as many state controllers as possible directly at the most important production facilities, construction sites, railways, in remote and economically important areas - Khabarovsk, Primorsky, Krasnoyarsk Territories, Novosibirsk, Arkhangelsk and Murmansk regions. Two weeks before the start of the Great Patriotic War, Mekhlis submitted a new proposal of the same kind to the decision-making bodies: on June 10, he submitted to the Secretary of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks Zhdanov for approval by the Organizing Bureau of the Central Committee a draft resolution on the introduction of the institute of controllers of the NKGK of the USSR in the regions territories and autonomous republics.

The regulation on the people's commissariat also provided for the appointment of supervisors directly to the most important production facilities, construction sites, railways. In October 1940, the Politburo approved the list of enterprises and construction projects of union subordination, proposed by Mekhlis, for which permanent controllers were appointed. The list covered the facilities of nine people's commissariats and departments (including the aviation, shipbuilding industry, weapons, ammunition, heavy engineering, and others) and included almost 200 names. Later, the People's Commissar for State Control addressed the Central Committee to Malenkov with a request to support the proposal to enter-

' GARF, f. 8300, op. 1, d. 1, l. 57; d. 12, l. 191-192, 260.

positions of permanent controllers on most of the country's railways.

It seems that in these proposals, the further, the more the exaggerated idea observed by Mekhlis since the time of the Civil War about the strength and effectiveness of purely administrative levers was reflected. After all, one must be aware that the mere presence of an inspector at a particular facility did not at all guarantee against marriage, theft, and abuse. Only supervision without including the economic levers of the struggle for quality and

productivity, safety and economy of labor and materials, as practice shows, little can be achieved. Nevertheless, the People's Commissar stubbornly planted his subordinates everywhere.

Cases of manifestation of stubbornness, a straightforward, simplified view of this or that event or phenomenon were not so rare in Lev Zakharovich. He taught his subordinates to delve deeply into the state of affairs during audits and inspections, to carefully understand the causes of mismanagement, but he himself often acted contrary to his own guidelines, becoming a prisoner of swagger and dilettantism. Given his post and the influence that he objectively had on decision-making on a national scale, this led to sometimes irreparable consequences.

General of the Army Khrulev, who during the years of the Great Patriotic War was Deputy People's Commissar for Defense and Chief of Logistics of the Red Army, recalled a similar incident. In 1940, the government decided where to concentrate mobilization stocks. Military logistics offered to place them in the Volga region, but the People's Commissar of State Control opposed this, insisting that stocks of even winter uniforms be accumulated in the border areas (they were going to fight on foreign territory). "In any objection to this," wrote Khrulev, "L.Z. Mekhlis saw wrecking... I.V. Stalin succumbed to the persuasion of Mekhlis and accepted his point of view. Subsequently, we had to pay dearly for this. A lot of materiel was either destroyed by our troops during the withdrawal, or captured by the enemy.

In this case, the People's Commissar of the Civil Code found himself in captivity of deeply flawed guidelines, according to which the military doctrine did not even provide for the protracted, defensive nature of the initial operations of the war. Real events unfolded in such a way that

that on the territory that the Soviet troops were forced to leave by July 10, 1941, there were more than 200 warehouses of central and district subordination, which accounted for more than half of all warehouses in the border districts. Needless to say, with what negative force this affected the supply of the army in the field. The authors of such a disastrous decision, the real "saboteurs" among whom not only Mekhlis played an active role, but also Stalin himself, in the highest echelons of power, of course, preferred not to remember. |

After the defeat of political oppositions in the 1930s, the only force capable of limiting Stalin's autocracy to some extent remained only the Soviet departments and their leaders. The General Secretary was forced to objectively reckon with them, because, even if he had the talents that court biographers attributed to him, he could not manage the country's complex economic mechanism alone. The further, the less it suited him, who was striving for the establishment of complete autocracy. As a convenient method of "education", he chose periodic - under the pretext of combating bureaucracy and departmentalism - dressing down and reprimanding.

First of all, Mekhlis became an instrument of pressure on the administrative elite. The facts of mismanagement, embezzlement and abuse in the people's commissariats, at enterprises, in institutions, revealed by the state control bodies in the course of numerous inspections, regardless of the specific perpetrators, indirectly cast a shadow on the heads of the people's commissariats and departments, gave Stalin reason to present this or that Serious claims made it possible for the nomenklatura worker to successfully instill in the managerial elite a kind of inferiority complex, a sense of uncertainty about the strength of their position. Therefore, the views of the former Minister of Agriculture of the USSR I.A. Benediktov, who was convinced that Mekhlis (like Beria) "Stalin used as a kind of" club of fear", with whose help slovenliness, idleness, carelessness and our other sores were beaten out of leaders of all ranks ... And, I must say, similar, a not very attractive method worked effectively". More convincing are the observations of the historian O.V. Khlevnyuk that this "baton of fear" served much more

more global plans of the leader - to eradicate even the remnants of any kind of political independence from representatives of the administrative elite!

Often, Mekhlis, feeling the leader's full support, also made direct accusations against big business executives and managers. Here are just some of the facts. Thanks to an audit conducted in November 1940 by the People's Commissariat of the Navy, Lev Zakharovich became aware of the "anti-state practice of double financial planning" that had taken place there. People's Commissar S.S. Dukelsky asked the government for a subsidy of 63 million rubles, while hiding the fact that the People's Commissariat had drawn up a second, real financial plan, which not only did not require a subsidy, but also expected a profit. To the report to the Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars Molotov on the results of the check, Mekhlis attached a draft resolution of the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR, which provided for: a) to issue a severe reprimand to Dukelsky, - the list of direct perpetrators of double planning in the People's Commissariat for Marine Fleet;

The state controllers checked the USSR Prosecutor's Office, more precisely, its administrative and financial department. For systematic violation of financial discipline, abuse of official position for personal purposes, by order of the People's Commissar of State Control, the head of the department, M.G. Besyakov, his deputy, head of the financial department and head of the economic department.

Mekhlis found an opportunity to "correct" the USSR Prosecutor V.M. Bochkov. On March 19, 1941, he informed Stalin and Molotov that Bochkov gave his subordinates an incorrect, contrary to the decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, explanation of the procedure for accounting and redistribution of excess equipment and materials at enterprises. The head of the Union Prosecutor's Office allowed not to bring the heads of enterprises to responsibility

Young Guard, 1989, No. 4. S. 62; Khlevnyuk O.V. Politburo. Mechanisms of political power in the 30s. M., 1996. S. 96.

2 GARF, f. 8300, op. 1, d. 4, l. 70-73.

especially if they carried out such a redistribution, albeit without the permission of the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR, but within the limits of one department. Mekhlis asked the leaders of the country to cancel such an "explanation" by Bochkov and did not fail to remind that the Union Constitution entrusted the USSR Prosecutor's Office with supervision and monitoring of the exact implementation of laws, but not with their explanation.

A convenient reason to pull up on this or that representative of the elite, to recall that his position and well-being to a decisive extent depend on the disposition of the leader, were the facts of everyday decay, manifestations, as they said then, of swagger, which became known thanks to the people's commissar of state control. The monstrous decline in the morals of the ruling elite was, of course, no secret to the leader, moreover, he looked at him favorably, tying supporters to himself with luxurious rations, dachas, and personal salaries.

But if necessary, such information was given a move. Even at the height of mass repressions, it was successfully tested by the ruling regime as an instrument of political struggle. As followed, for example, from the joint resolution of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks and the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR that came into force in February 1938, "a number of arrested conspirators (Rudzutak, Rozengolts, Antipov, Mezhlauk, Karakhan, Yagoda, etc.) built themselves grandiose dachas -palaces with 15-20 or more rooms, where they lived in luxury and spent people's money, thus demonstrating their complete everyday decay and rebirth.

Since even after the end of the mass repressions, egalitarianism remained the officially welcomed line of behavior of the leaders, Mekhlis informed Stalin about the revealed deviations from it. Thus, the facts of financial abuses in the People's Commissariat of the Meat and Dairy Industry of the USSR, which were happening with the blessing of People's Commissar V.V. Vorobiev; illegal payment for food by People's Commissar of the Marine Fleet Dukelsky from the social and cultural fund of the People's Commissariat (the People's Commissar of the Civil Code even made a cash allowance for him in the amount of 3,288 rubles); misbehavior of the Deputy People's Commissar of the forest industry



T.F. Trudov and First Deputy Commissar M.I. Saltykov (he made the first free of charge for himself at a subordinate enterprise

a set of furniture, and the second patronized lovers of comfort at public expense) '.

Not without the participation of Mehlis at the 18th All-Union Party Conference (February 1941), six people were transferred from members of the Central Committee to candidates, and another 15 people were excluded from the candidates. The laconic wording - "failed to ensure the fulfillment of their duties" - in a number of cases directly relied on materials provided to the top leadership of the party by the ubiquitous people's commissar of state control.

The author is not inclined to underestimate the objective usefulness for society of the efforts of state controllers to uncover the facts of embezzlement of state officials, especially egregious ones, given that the people generally lived poorly and difficultly. However, it is impossible not to pay attention to the fact that the punishments suffered by top managers convicted of criminal offenses were already very modest. Especially against the background of the mass and cruel application of the "law on spikelets" of August 7, 1932 and other acts that punished for theft of socialist property against ordinary citizens. And the point here is not the scarcity of the powers of the People's Commissar of State Control. Personally, he was only allowed to frighten embezzlers. Stalin, being the main consumer of the information coming from Mekhlis, decided himself what to do with this or that wronged people's commissar or party secretary.

One way or another, Lev Zakharovich made his feasible, although, perhaps, not visible by many, contribution to the final approval of Stalin's autocracy, to the reduction of the role of the once main political body in the country - the Politburo of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks. The "transfer" of real power from the Politburo to the Council of People's Commissars, begun by repressions against members of the top leadership in 1937-1938, marked at the turn of the 1930s and 1940s by the disorganization of the former order of work of the Politburo, a reduction in the number of issues considered by it and decisions made, ended with several fundamental political moves of Stalin in the prewar months.

And all of them directly affected Mehlis. According to the joint resolution of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks and the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR adopted on March 21, 1941, Lev Zakharovich became one of the deputy chairmen of the Council of People's Commissars.

' GARF, f. 8300, op. 1, d. 2, l. 197; d. 4, l. 53-54, 58-60.

coma (concurrently) and in this capacity significantly expanded his powers. Each deputy chairman received supervision over two or three people's commissariats and could now single-handedly, albeit within the framework of established plans, solve all operational issues in the subordinate people's commissariats. Moreover, all decisions of the deputy chairmen of the Council of People's Commissars were issued as government orders.

In accordance with the second joint resolution adopted on the same day, the Bureau of the Council of People's Commissars was created - a new authority not provided for by the Constitution, but nevertheless endowed with all the rights of the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR, since its decisions were issued as decisions of the Council of People's Commissars. At first, a limited circle of people entered the Bureau, but already on May 7, all 15 deputy chairmen of the Council of People's Commissars, and, consequently, the Mehlis, became its members.'

Considering that a few days before that, on May 4, 1941, Stalin was appointed chairman of the Council of People's Commissars, we can definitely say that the formalization of the process of concentration of party and state power in our country in one hand was completed.

In the Bureau of the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR, Lev Zakharovich was surrounded exclusively by members of the Politburo, only he and Bulganin were not part of the top party leadership. Thus, he turned out to be a recognized participant in the process, which was persistently carried out by Stalin - the pushing away from the power levers of the old comrades-in-arms of Molotov, Kaganovich, Mikoyan, Voroshilov, Malenkov, Beria, Shcherbakov, in the Council of People's Commissars - Voznesensky, Bulganin, Beria, Mekhlis.

An indirect, albeit very expressive, assessment of the efforts of the latter in the post of People's Commissar of State Control of the USSR was his appointment (concurrently) as Chairman of the State Staff Commission of the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR in accordance with the decision of the Council of People's Commissars of June 5, 1941. The main task of the commission was to develop and implement measures to improve the state apparatus, including: the development of a nationwide nomenclature of positions and official salaries, consideration of the structure and approval of the states of the republican people's commissariats and departments, the abolition of artificially created links of the state

Stalin's Politburo in the 1930s. S. 35.

and economic apparatuses, elimination of duplication and parallelism in their work.

There is reason to believe that Stalin, whose signature is under this resolution, was satisfied with the efforts of Mekhlis as People's Commissar of the Civil Code, approved of his perseverance, readiness to punish regardless of persons, and gradually expanded his field of activity. The leader was convinced that his longtime nominee was doing a good job of keeping people's commissars and other economic leaders in suspense, preventing stable teams from forming around them, preventing the people's commissariats from turning into monsters with enormous economic potential and therefore becoming more independent of the government and its new chairman.

The solution of this problem was facilitated by the continuous process of disaggregation of the people's commissariats throughout the second half of the 1930s. By the beginning of the Great Patriotic War, the NKGK of the USSR was already exercising its functions in relation to 46 people's commissariats and departments. Personally, Mekhlis, as people's commissar, oversaw the activities of the chief controllers in two of them - defense and the Navy, without entrusting them to deputies. He seemed to have a presentiment that it was there, in the military department, that he would have to spend the next four and a half years.

Lev Zakharovich's last pre-war day began quite unexpectedly. In a package delivered by a courier from the Kremlin in the gait of the "three crosses", the People's Commissar of State Control found a resolution of the Politburo of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks on his appointment as head of the Main Directorate of Political Propaganda of the Red Army. At the same time, he retained his previous position.

True, due to Mekhlis being busy with affairs in the military department, the duties of the people's commissar of state control were actually performed by his deputy V.F. Popov. Throughout the war (and even then only when he worked in Moscow) Lev Zakharovich signed a few orders as the head of the people's commissariat.

By the time the war began, he happened to head the NKGK for less than a year. But he had almost a decisive influence on the functioning of the new state structure. In the style of his activity, the desire of the Stalinist leadership for total control as a universal means of control was refracted. Only if before meh

The fox controlled the sphere of public consciousness, but now he exerted full force on the administrative levers, ensuring the growth of the efficiency of social production and the regime of economy. And he did it with his characteristic energy and assertiveness.

Chapter 6

AT THE HELD OF THE MAIN POLITICAL DEPARTMENT OF THE RKKA

ALL TO SUBMIT TO THE ENEMY

The return of Mekhlis to the post that he left less than a year before - the head of the Main Directorate of Political Propaganda of the Red Army, was not accidental. Army commissar 1st rank Zaporozhets, who replaced Lev Zakharovich in September 1940, was clearly inferior to his predecessor. With all his major shortcomings, Mekhlis was a public politician, a personality

large-scale, authoritative in the highest party and government circles. He combined unconditional devotion to the leader with initiative, pressure, possessed a penetrating character, the ability, regardless of the price, to achieve the set goal, uncompromising exactingness on the verge of cruelty, and even beyond it. Zaporozhets, who came to the post of head of the GUPTs from the post of a member of the military council of the Moscow Military District, remained a military official of medium caliber, pale, inconspicuous, one of many. Stalin was clearly disappointed in him. It is no coincidence that in the course of the outbreak of the war, Alexander Ivanovich went all the time "on the decline" and ended it as a lieutenant general, a member of the military council of the army, and then the rear military district.

The first day in his new position, which turned out to be the last day of peace for the country, Mekhlis spent in the People's Commissariat of Defense, taking over cases. His urgent departure was planned together with People's Commissar for Defense Tymoshenko to the Western Special Military District, but before our very eyes, the thickening thunderous atmosphere on the border forced him to abandon his plan. On the night of June 22, he was summoned to Stalin for participation, judging by the entries in the Kremlin visitor's log

the leader's office, at the meeting of top political and military leaders, which ended at 23:00 Moscow time'.

Lev Zakharovich was also among those few figures (besides him - Timoshenko, Zhukov, Molotov, Beria) whom Stalin at 5:45 a.m. on June 22 gathered for the first meeting after the news of the attack by Nazi Germany. Here, Directive No. 2 of the People's Commissar of Defense was developed, which ordered the troops of the Red Army "to fall upon the enemy forces and destroy them in areas where they violated the Soviet border," as well as the most important decisions were made that marked the beginning of the transformation of the country into a single military camp.

... In September 1940, Mekhlis left his post in the atmosphere of the harsh lessons of the war with Finland. Taking them into account, a feverish restructuring unfolded in the Red Army. And the further, the more it went under the sign that, as Stalin made it clear at the reception of graduates of military academies on May 5, 1941, a war with fascist Germany in the future is inevitable and an offensive policy should be pursued.

This thesis was also reflected in the propaganda guidelines for the troops. On May 25, the head of the GUPP Zaporozhets presented the draft directive "Immediate tasks of party political work in the Red Army" to the member of the Main Military Council, Secretary of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks, Malenkov, with a request to discuss it at a meeting of the GVS. It proposed "to move from a peaceful content and tone to an explanation of the slogan about the offensive military policy of the Soviet people and the Red Army. To educate personnel in the spirit of militancy and offensive impulse, in the consciousness of the inevitability of a clash between the Soviet Union and the capitalist world..." And although at the meeting of the GVS on June 4, Malenkov, who turned out to be an unimportant prophet, expressed claims to the authors of the draft: "The document is primitively presented, as if tomorrow we were going to fight," he, on the other hand, agreed with Zhdanov's opinion expressed here that the turn was being made, after all, not in politics, but in propaganda, and that "we had an offensive policy before."

! Visitors to the Kremlin office I.V. Stalin. Journals (notebooks) of records of persons accepted by the first general secretary, 1924-1953 // Historical archive,

1996, No. 2. S. 51.

Promptly finalized in accordance with the comments made during the discussion at the Main Military Council, the draft already reached Malenkov on June 9, and on the 20th it was handed over to Stalin. Re-titled "On the Tasks of Political Propaganda in the Red Army for the Near Future," the document bore the same stamp of "offensiveness." At the same time, speaking correctly about the need to debunk the idea of the German army as supposedly invincible, the draft directive simultaneously contained statements that were clearly contradictory to the truth that "a significant part of the German army was tired of the war", and "the transformation of Germany into

enslaver of peoples, difficult economic conditions ... give rise to discontent among the people masses."

The leader did not have time to approve this document. Nevertheless, many of the provisions contained in it reflected the mindset of army political workers, were propagandized among the troops, and even after the start of the war for some time dominated the minds of the personnel, giving rise to illusions about the rapid defeat of Germany on its own territory, about ready to flare up in the rear shist troops uprisings of the German proletariat. To dispel such illusions, to reorganize party political work, taking into account the situation that had changed dramatically as a result of the outbreak of the war, was the responsibility of the Mekhlis, together with the apparatus of the GUPP and a huge detachment of political workers of the army in the field. On July 10, by order of the State Defense Committee, he also took the post of Deputy People's Commissar of Defense of the USSR.

The appointment of a new head of the Main Directorate of Political Propaganda was made without publicity and so hastily that, according to the testimony of the former head of the 7th department of the GUPP (for work among the troops and the population of the enemy), retired Major General Burtsev, even many leaders of the middle The members of the staff of the main administration found out about him only the next day, with the beginning of the war.

Lev Zakharovich, working in the People's Commissariat of State Control of the USSR, was not directly connected with the army. Nevertheless, according to the unanimous testimony of people who saw him in the atmosphere of the first days of the Great

'TsAMO, f. 32, op. 11309, d. 101, l. 29-30. See also: Nevezhin V.A. Offensive War Syndrome. pp. 226-227.

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Patriotic, this did not prevent him from reliably being a prisoner of well-known guidelines - "not to succumb to provocations", not to carry out any measures to bring troops to combat readiness "without special orders".

This is what the Chief Marshal of Artillery N.N. Voronov. He met Mekhlis in Timoshenko's office at dawn on June 22, immediately after receiving reports of enemy air raids on Soviet cities. When the head of the central office reported all the data at his disposal on the actions of enemy aircraft, the people's commissar, without expressing any comments on the report, handed Voronov a notebook and offered to put the report in writing. And while he was taking notes, Mekhlis stood behind him and watched whether the oral report was accurately stated. "After I finished, Mekhlis offered to sign ...," Voronov wrote. — I was amazed that in such a serious situation, the people's commissar (or at least his deputy, it's logical to add. — Yu.R) did not set any task for the air defense forces, did not give any instructions. It seemed to me then: he could not believe that the war had really begun ... ""!

It seemed strange and unnecessary to Voronov and the desire to have a brief oral report necessarily recorded on paper for reinsurance, as if at that moment there was no more important matter, and fascist bombs fell not on our cities.

If the leaders of the People's Commissariat of Defense still continued to live with the concepts of peacetime, then the terrible events in the western regions of the country very soon forced them to reckon with themselves. Mehliis included. The political workers of the border districts, which became fronts on the first day, asked for various instructions on how to act in fundamentally new conditions. Communication with them was constantly interrupted, and in many cases disappeared for a long time. Increased attention was also required for the ideological support of the mobilization of conscripts called for in the country announced in the country. The newly formed units and formations, like a sponge, absorbed the cadres of political workers, the need for whom was already acute. In a word, a huge mass of issues appeared on the agenda, which should have been addressed immediately.

<sup>1</sup> Voronov N.N. In the service of the military. M., 1963. S. 176.

Rare assertiveness, and iron health, and a long-term habit of exhausting work, often at night, acquired during his tenure as assistant to the general secretary of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks and the editor of Pravda, helped Mekhlis to overcome this stream. Haven't been home in weeks. Next to the office, he was equipped with a rest room. Two hours of sleep - and again at the desktop. The reception area was literally crammed with people waiting to be received. According to eyewitnesses, he listened to his interlocutors little, limited himself mainly to giving orders and pumped.

True, an army commissar of the 1st rank could rarely be seen in Moscow for more than a few days in a row. He constantly went to the front (another question is how useful it was), grabbed dozens of cases, not knowing depression. "Healthy. Enough strength for the whole war," he wrote to his wife on October 1, 1941. "I work a lot, from dawn to dusk."

Indeed, anyone could envy his energy. Alas, very often she harbored deeds far from good. With the outbreak of the war, the suspiciousness characteristic of this man ceased to have any boundaries at all. He still could not understand that the war has its own laws - neither repressions, nor hyper-vigilance, nor party intrigues can win it. The situation demanded the utmost restraint, sober objective assessments, readiness to rely on professionals. But the head of the GlavPU and functionaries like him remained captive to the pre-war attitudes towards the detection of sabotage, triple suspicion, deep distrust of people, both ordinary and vested with great powers.

Let us turn again to the memoirs of Chief Marshal of Artillery Voronov. On one of the July nights, by order of the commander of the Moscow Air Defense Corps, General D.A. Zhuravlev, on the nearest approaches to the capital, two unidentified aircraft coming from the west were fired upon. Moscow then for the first time heard the roar of anti-aircraft guns. Later, however, it turned out that the planes were Soviet, sent without any notice from the air defense command from one of the fronts.

"Before the shooting stopped," writes Voronov, "the analysis of this incident began. I was urgently called by L.Z. Mekhlis, who allegedly received an order from above to investigate and determine my personal guilt in the shelling of his aircraft. I angrily took

all charges. While we were arguing with Mekhlis, General Gromadin (the head of the Moscow air defense zone. - Y.R.) was summoned to Headquarters, and there it was decided to immediately restore order in the flights of our aviation, to demand the strictest discipline in the air ... The night incident served as a good lesson, he riveted everyone's attention to the needs of air defense, to the creation of a strict regime in the air, to increasing the vigilance of all air defense forces and means.

Let us add that this was one of those rare cases when the zeal of Mekhlis in identifying the perpetrators, fortunately, had no consequences.

In the autumn of 1941, N.D., head of the Main Artillery Directorate of the Red Army, was almost removed from his post and put on trial. Yakovlev, future Marshal of Artillery. And here it was not without the intervention of Mekhlis. He, as Deputy People's Commissar of Defense, was assigned to supervise the formation of new infantry divisions of the Stavka reserve. GAU provided them with weapons and ammunition. The Mekhlis chose an "original" way to control the fulfillment of supply plans. He began to systematically call Yakovlev to his place at midnight and there, with predilection, to check the figures. In the presence of the chief of the GAU, he called the commanders and commissars of divisions and found out whether the main department had given him the correct information. This took 3-4 hours.

"There was resentment for distrusting me, a responsible official," Yakovlev recalled. — But most of all — dissatisfaction with the useless waste of time. And somehow, being in the office of the head of GlavPUR and listening to how he conducts endless telephone conversations, I exploded. I told Mekhlis everything I think about the procedure of these humiliating checks. I did not hide the fact that I am sometimes enraged by his unskilled questions. And that under my command there is a GAU, which works for hours without its chief "...

And although Mekhlis, as Nikolai Dmitrievich assumed, complained to the Supreme, Yakovlev managed to avoid drastic measures. But in February 1952, he, then Deputy Minister of the Armed Forces of the USSR, was arrested on absurd charges of sabotage.

Yakovlev N.D. About artillery and a little about myself. M., 1981. S. 72.

agency in organizing the production of automatic anti-aircraft guns. Only the death of Stalin prevented the promotion of this, and other "exaggerated" cases like him.

The head of the GUPP skillfully played along with Stalin, who generally had little regard for the top military in the first period of the war, the consequences of which were fully felt even by the chief of the General Staff, the future Marshal Zhukov. According to his "Memoirs and Reflections", the circumstances of the report of the Chief of the General Staff to the Supreme Commander-in-Chief on July 29, 1941 (its result was the removal of the commander from office) are known in detail.

This is how Georgy Konstantinovich remembered this scene: "Taking with me a map of the strategic situation ... I went to I.V. Stalin, where A.N. Poskrebyshev, and asked him to report on me.

- Sit down. Ordered to wait for Malenkov and Mekhlis.

Ten minutes later everyone was assembled and I was invited to I.V. Stalin...

Laying out my cards on the table, I ... spoke about the groupings of German troops and outlined the conjectural nature of their immediate actions (according to Zhukov, the enemy was not going to attack Moscow yet, but, taking advantage of the weakness of the Central Front, he would try to strike to the flank and rear of the troops of the South-Western Front, which held the Kiev region. Therefore, the commander proposed to strengthen the central front, including at the expense of the western, Moscow direction. - Yu.R.).

— How do you know how the German troops will act? - L.Z. sharply and unexpectedly threw a remark. Mekhlis (an amateur in military affairs, apparently, he did not even imagine what a commander's foresight was. - Yu.R.).

"I don't know the plans according to which the German troops will act," I replied, "but, based on an analysis of the situation, they can only act in this way and not otherwise ...

- What are you, - asked I.V. Stalin, do you consider it possible to weaken the direction to Moscow?

— No, I don't think so. But the enemy, in our opinion, will not move forward here yet, and in 12-15 days we can transfer from the Far East at least eight fully combat-ready divi

M... A Mno

At seventeen boyish years. Odessa, year 1906

"In the photograph of Malkus, which is on Richelieu Street in Feldman's house...". 1910

Bombardier of the 2nd Grenadier Artillery Brigade This is how Lev Mekhlis met

Kharmii Lev Mekhlis. 1912 February Revolution

With wife Elizaveta Abramovna and son

Leonid in the rest house. 1925

Father and son. 1942

Head of the Political Directorate of the Red Army Army Commissar of the 2nd rank From time to time Lev Zakharovich L. Mekhlis. 1938 came out of the shadow of Stalin

"In the issue of Pravda there is not a single line that Comrade. Mehliis ... ". 1934

The editor-in-chief of Pravda and this was how he was, working as head of the press department and in the holy of holies - the secretariat of the Stalinist publishing house of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks. 1925

L. Mehliis. 1937

The warmth of their relationship did not differ.

May 1, 1940: in half an hour - a military parade. From left to right: Commissar of Defense Marshal S.K. Timoshenko, Marshal K.E. Voroshilov, army commissar of the 1st rank L.Z. Mekhlis, Marshal S.M. Budyonny

HONA AAA Ar ba ra

On the Crimean front. End of winter 1942

In a moment of calm.

On the envelope in which this photo was kept was written:

"Never post."

Crimean Front, 1942

On the Crimean front, shortly before the German offensive

Ah,

on the ground ... "1 German e on the damned one was not already" I saw and

With the legendary pilot Valery

Chkalov. 1937

} \ Give us the North Pole! In the foreground, left to right: L.Z. Mehliis, head of the air expedition to organize a drifting

station "SP-1" Academician O.Yu. Schmidt, head of "SP-1" I.D. Papanin. May 1937

With the "Stalin's falcons" pilot V.K. Kokkinaki (far left) and test navigator A.M. Bryandinsky, who in June 1938 made a non-stop flight on the TsKB-30 "Moscow" aircraft on the route Moscow - the Far East

K.E. Voroshilov, L.Z. Mekhlis, I.V. Stalin and V.M. Molotov

In the foreground: Head of the Political Directorate of the Red Army L.Z. Mehliis,

his assistant in the Komsomol S.E. Zakharov, head of the VPA them. Lenina F.E. Bokov

In liberated Uzhgorod: a member of the military council of the 4th Ukrainian Front, Colonel-General L.Z. Mekhlis with the commander of the front troops, Colonel-General I.E. Petrov (right)

and Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars of Ukraine N.S. Khrushchev. October 1944

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A. M e

Launch of a test train of the Moscow Metro on February 6, 1935. From left to right: L.Z. Mehlis, A.G. Khanjyan, N.S. Khrushchev, L.P. Beria, N.A. Lakoba

With the commander of the 4th Ukrainian Front, General of the Army A.I. Eremenko (far left) in Berlin. May 1945

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1937 has already come, but they are still together ...

From left to right: V.I. Mezhlauk - Chairman of the State Planning Commission (shot in 1938), V.M. Molotov - Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR (one of the leaders of the repressions), V.Ya. Chubar - People's Commissar for Finance (shot in 1939), L.Z. Mekhlis - editor-in-chief of Pravda

At the chessboard with the chairman of the Central Executive Committee of the USSR M.I. Kalinin. Second half of the 30s

With First Secretary

Central Committee of the Communist Party (b) of Ukraine Nikita Khrushchev during the "liberation campaign"

to Western Ukraine. September 1939

"David Ortenberg was one of the few

with whom Mehlis was friends

To see the enemy with my own eyes ... Member of the Military Council of the Bryansk Front, Lieutenant General Mekhlis

With the representative of the Headquarters and the Supreme High Command Marshal

G.K. Zhukov (left). Kursk Bulge

Member of the Military Council of the 6th Army Corps Commissar Mehlis. July 1942

- Will we give the Far East to the Japanese? - quipped L.Z. Fur- LIS...

— But what about Kyiv? - looking at me point-blank, asked I.V. Sta- LIN...

“Kyiv will have to be abandoned,” I said firmly!

Having lost his temper and calling the proposal made then by Zhukov about the counterattack of the Soviet troops near Yelnya nonsense, Stalin removed Georgy Konstantinovich from his post.

It is interesting that Mekhlis's intrigue in relation to Zhukov found unexpected confirmation in Beria's note dated July 1, 1953, sent to the head of government Georgy Malenkov and other members of the Politburo. The ominous Lawrence was already under arrest by this time and begged his former "comrades" to listen to him. His testimonies should be trusted, because to be once again caught in a lie in that situation meant for him to lose his last hope that he would be listened to.

So, here it is, a fragment of a note, written, by the way, illiterate and confused (which, in general, is not surprising, given the position of the all-powerful minister yesterday, and today a prisoner): “Dear Georgy and dear comrades, I am now I am in such a state that it is excusable for me that I have to write like this...



if it's good to think it's just a misunderstanding [...] that this is not true, Georgy [...] you know it well [...] On the contrary, all comrades M[ikoyan] and Molot[ov] should know well that Zhuk [s] when [he] was removed from the general staff at the instigation of Mekhlis[a], because his position] was very dangerous, together with you we persuaded him to appoint him commander of the [Reserve] front and thereby saved the future] hero of our Patriotic war ... "

Not everyone managed to get off as "easy" as Voronov or even Zhukov, who was removed from the post of Chief of the General Staff and placed at the head of the Reserve Front troops. The stereotypes of 1937 dominated Lev Zakharovich powerfully. It was cruel and far away

Zhukov G.K. Memories and reflections. In 3 vols. 10th ed., add. T.2. M., 1990. S. 119-121.

? Lavrenty Beria. 1953. Transcript of the July plenum of the Central Committee of the CPSU and other documents. M., 1999. S. 407.

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but the war was not in our favor, it seemed that every professional should be on the account, and Mekhlis, copying Stalin, sent someone to the scaffold, someone to the camp, just as before the war. The scale, of course, is different: the commanders of the fronts and people's commissars, unlike the leader, were, of course, too tough, but the "material" was also for him.

On June 24, 1941, brigade commander M.A. Semenov. However, he did not arrive at the duty station in time, and the next day he was detained drunk in Moscow. The incident was reported to the head of the GUPP, who instructed the chief military prosecutor to convict Semyonov "according to the laws of war." June 30 from V.V. Ulrich, chairman of the Military Collegium of the Supreme Court of the USSR, received an answer: brigade commander Semyonov was sentenced to capital punishment — execution by firing squad with deprivation of military rank. At the direction of Mekhlis, the lecturer of the GUP, regimental commissar A.B., was also arrested and sentenced to death. Shlensky, who arbitrarily left the combat area in the Baltics.

The head of the Main Directorate of Political Propaganda considered such "purges" to be the most important task. They, in his opinion, fit into the process of restructuring the party political work in the Red Army in connection with the beginning of the Great Patriotic War.

The transition to military rails was required immediately. Therefore, already on the first day of the war, Mekhlis sent a directive to the political agencies of the border military districts, ordering them to thoroughly explain to the personnel the Statement of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks and the Soviet government in connection with the fascist aggression, which was published by the Deputy Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR Molotov on the All-Union Radio . On June 24, he signed a directive that demanded that all party political work be carried out under the slogans of the CPSU (b): "Let us rally even closer around our glorious Bolshevik Party and the Soviet government!", "Fascism is the enslavement of peoples. Fascism is hunger, poverty, ruin. All forces to fight against fascism!", "The Red Army and all our people are waging a victorious Patriotic War for the Motherland, for honor, for freedom!" and others.

TsAMO, f. 32, op. 11309, d. 13, l. 217, 243, 315.

It should be noted that the head of the GUPP showed a considerable initiative in this (although, for sure, it was sanctioned from above). As early as on the third day of the war, the propagandists and other ideological workers had at their disposal a document, based on which it was possible to conduct a broad and intelligible explanation of the nature of the outbreak of war, the goals pursued by German fascism. The directive armed the masses of warriors with simple but understandable slogans, from which it followed that yesterday's partner in the non-aggression pact is today a bloody aggressor; that the war unleashed by him is not for life, but for death; that the cause for which the Soviet people are fighting is right. As is known, these slogans were reflected in detail only in

the famous directive of the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR and the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks of June 29, 1941, as well as in Stalin's speech 3 July.

The head of the GUPP demanded that more attention be paid to agitation, that rallies, political information, conversations, and joint listening to Sovinformburo reports be widely used as the main forms of political training most suitable in combat conditions. But political studies with Red Army soldiers and junior commanders on the front line were canceled, they were kept as the main form of political education only in reserve and newly formed units, when personnel were withdrawn to the second echelon or for reorganization.

When Mekhlis tried to sum up some results of party political work in the first weeks of the war, it became unpleasant for him to discover how purposefully, not quickly, and without due resourcefulness many political workers acted. They behaved as if they were in a peaceful environment: they sat in headquarters, had little contact with personnel, reacted poorly to phenomena generated by the very situation of retreat and battles with a sophisticated enemy - confusion, panic, disorganization, lack of proper perseverance and perseverance. Combat experience was poorly popularized, political agencies underestimated the work among the troops and the population of the enemy. With a special directive, Mekhlis demanded that the military councils and heads of the political propaganda departments of the fronts eliminate the identified shortcomings, ensure that political workers actually lead the party political work in units, ensure the vanguard role of communists and Komsomol members, educate in personal

having become an offensive impulse, fury towards the enemy, readiness to fight to the last drop of blood for every inch of Soviet land.

Curious new accents, which Mekhlis considered necessary to place especially. For the first time since the beginning of the Great Patriotic War, he so clearly rejected the propaganda rhetoric about the clash of predominantly class interests in the war with Germany, about anti-communism as the main motive for the actions of the Nazi elite. From the structures subordinate to him, he demanded to deeply explain to the personnel that the fascist aggression is in the nature of a foreign invasion, against which our people rose to the Patriotic War. Although the document contained the thesis that the fate of Soviet power was being decided on the battlefields, it was presented casually, without emphasis, and the statement came to the fore that Hitler's main goal was to exterminate the Slavs and especially Russians, to transform peoples Soviet Union into slaves of German princes and barons.

The ruling elite of the country, in this case in the person of Mekhlis, realized that the thesis about the priority of class interests over national ones, about proletarian internationalism did not work in the outbreak of war, and took the necessary turnaround. The same goal was also served by the widespread circulation among the population of the occupied Soviet lands of the appeal of the All-Slavic rally, which revealed "the insidious plan of German fascism to seize forever our ancient Slavic lands, give them into the hands of German landowner barons, into the hands of the Italian, Hungarian nobility and turn the Slavs into eternal slaves.

Truly, as a personal gift, the head of the GUPP perceived the reorganization, by decision of the Politburo of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks and the decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR of July 16, 1941, of political propaganda bodies and the introduction of the institution of military commissars. "The war expanded the scope of political work in our army and demanded that political workers not limit their work to propaganda, but also take responsibility for military work on the fronts" - these words from the decree seemed to return Lev

Russian archive. The Great Patriotic War. The main political bodies of the Armed Forces of the USSR in the Great Patriotic War of 1941-1945: documents and materials. M.. 1996. S. 42-44.

Zakharovich to his commissar youth, to the deeply rooted since the Civil War, but carefully concealed rejection of the very principle of one-man command.

The GUPP was reorganized into GlavPU - the Main Political Directorate of the Red Army, and the departments and departments of political propaganda - into political departments and departments. In regiments, divisions, headquarters, military schools and institutions of the Red Army, and a little later in all battalions of rifle divisions, tank battalions and artillery battalions, the institution of military commissars was introduced, and in companies, batteries, squadrons - the institution of political leaders. A month later, military commissars also took the places of political officers in tank companies and artillery batteries.

On July 20, the new state of affairs was confirmed by the directive "On the tasks of the military commissars and political workers of the Red Army", signed by People's Commissar of Defense Stalin and Deputy People's Commissar, Head of the GlavPU of the Red Army Mekhlis. The document reflected the cruel reality of the first weeks of the war: on the one hand, the retreat, insufficient combat readiness and stability of many units and units, and on the other hand, the need in connection with this extreme mobilization of physical and mental strength, strong discipline, perseverance, will, selflessness. At the same time, the directive clearly showed the readiness of the ruling elite of the country to compensate for their gross mistakes and crimes, which consisted in the unpreparedness of the USSR for war, at the expense of people's sacrifice. Judging by the draft directive prepared by Mekhlis, it was originally conceived as coming from GlavPU. Stalin, however, raised its level by putting his signature in the first place and making a number of corrections.

Not to succumb to panic, to mobilize personnel to stop the Nazi armada at any cost - the implementation of this course was entrusted, first of all, to military commissars and political workers. Today, unlike the days of the past, they are spoken of ambiguously. Sometimes, doubts are expressed about the need for such an institution in the Red Army. Of course, political workers were needed to carry out educational work in the spirit of patriotism, however, in practice, the institution of military commissars contributed to the establishment of dualism in the leadership of personal

thus establishing and undermining the fundamental principle of unity of command for any army.

Let's look again at the directive of 20 July. It directly obliges the commissars - here the style of Mekhlis, the vocabulary of the 30s is simply striking - "to be in fact the eyes and ears of the Bolshevik Party and the Soviet government, the most vigilant and informed people in the units. To know the operational situation in detail, to help the commander (in the Mekhlis project, in general, it was "together with the commander." - Y.R.) to develop a combat order, to strictly control the implementation of all orders of the high command.

..Timely signal to the Supreme Command and the Government about commanders and political workers who are unworthy of the title of commander and political worker and discredit the honor of the Workers 'and Peasants' Red Army with their behavior" (underlined by the authors of the directive. - Yu.R.).

"THE EXISTING ORDER IS UNSUITABLE..."

Already the first day of the war revealed an urgent need for ideological workers. In Moscow, they were still trying to figure out what was happening on the western border, but alarming signals about a personnel "hunger" had already gone from the places. Thus, a member of the military council of the Kiev Special Military District, Corps Commissar N.N. Vashugin informed: "I don't have a reserve of political workers, the senior, highest group is especially needed." In response, the Mekhlis allowed the early graduation of district party courses, courses for personnel political personnel at the military-political schools of the district, and courses for junior political officers. All political workers of the KOVO were seconded from the Moscow courses (at the State Unitary Enterprise).

Similar instructions were given to other districts that became fronts. But private measures could not replace the system of registration and distribution of political workers throughout the army. Mekhlis made efforts to fine-tune such a system for each category of political composition - top, senior and middle. On June 23, he gives the Deputy Chief of the General Staff General

Lieutenant N.F. Vatutin, an instruction without his permission not to take a single person from educational institutions under the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks - the Higher Party

ly, the Higher School of Party Organizers and the Lenin Courses, which worked in Moscow and Leningrad, believing, not without reason, that they would provide a significant reserve for the senior political staff. Indeed, by decision of the Central Committee of June 27, the Moscow and Leningrad Lenin courses were transferred to the jurisdiction of the People's Commissariat of Defense. On their basis, courses were created at the Military-Political Academy. IN AND. Lenin and at the Moscow political school. In total, 2,500 people came to the disposal of the GUPP — the students of the Higher Party School and the Higher School of Party Organizers joined the students of Lenkurs at the beginning of July.

All military-political educational institutions of central subordination have switched over to reduced training periods. Schools and courses for junior political commissars were created at the fronts, fleets and armies. In total, by the end of 1941, 90 educational institutions trained political workers, including 14 of the highest and senior level and 76 of the middle.

The need for leading cadres of political workers, however, sharply increased. To cover them, the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks, with the active participation of the head of the GUPP, resorted to personal party mobilizations. 8,800 senior officials, including 500 secretaries of the Central Committee of the Communist Parties of the Union republics, regional committees, city committees, district committees, came to leading military-political work in the Red Army only in the first six months of the war.

Cadres, cadres... The need for middle-level political workers turned out to be especially great. Most of them were lost in battles, and they were required in ever-increasing numbers when forming new units. A significant increase was provided by the mobilization of party members and Komsomol members. The first two mobilizations were carried out according to the decisions of the Politburo of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks of June 27 and 29. With 41.5 thousand mobilized, it was proposed to conduct military training, "and then send them to the divisions most in need of 500 people each."

Mekhlis himself opened another reserve for replenishing the cadres of political workers directly in the troops. While on the Western Front, on July 8, 1941, he telegraphed to the Secretary of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks Malenkov and his deputy Kuznetsov: "The existing procedure for approving political personnel is unsuitable for wartime." In order to ensure the most efficient deployment of personnel and its

temporary staffing of units and departments of political propaganda of the active armies, he proposed to establish a new order, namely, to give the military councils of the fronts, armies and division commanders the right to appoint to positions, starting with the heads of departments of the OPP of the armies and the UPP of the fronts, deputy commanders of divisions and corps for political affairs and deputy chiefs of the OPP of divisions and corps and below, down to deputy commanders of companies, batteries for political affairs. The situation, therefore, forced to decentralize the solution of personnel issues, to expand the rights of commanders and military councils in the field. It is characteristic that, as follows from the same telegram, Mekhlis himself did not wait for confirmation from Moscow and carried out the measures he proposed on the Western Front in secret.

On August 9, he already gave a direct directive on the creation within ten days in regiments, divisions, armies, fronts and districts of a continuously replenished reserve of political personnel. The tense situation demanded that all resources be taken into account. Having found out that political workers returning from medical institutions after being cured are distributed without a system, Lev Zakharovich orders the military councils and heads of political departments of the districts to send those who have recovered to the disposal of strictly defined officials, reporting on arrivals daily.

Perseverance bore fruit, little by little a system of reserve personnel was established. By the time Mekhlis was released from his duties (June 1942), the Main Political Directorate had in its reserve over 900 political workers of various categories, and there were an additional 150-200 people on each front.

Let's return to party mobilizations, bearing in mind that basically the mobilized went to the active army as political fighters. The directive to the military councils and heads of political propaganda departments, signed by Mekhlis on June 28, gave the necessary explanations: the selected political fighters are reduced to three-company communist battalions and are in the position of privates, a two-week (monthly) for those who did not serve in the army) training. Upon completion, some of the most trained warriors can be assigned to

'TsAMO, f. 32, op. 11309, d. 9, l. 444.

positions of deputy political officers and deputy company commanders for political affairs.

As a member of the Military Council of the Moscow Military District, General K.F. Telegin, Mekhlis himself broke the practice of military training of political fighters and their distribution in parts, established by his directive. He ordered ahead of schedule, two weeks after the Politburo's decision of June 27, to form marching companies from the existing contingent and sent them to the front line (only 75 companies went to the Western Front and another 50 to Leningrad)! And there they were very often used inefficiently, on the move, thoughtlessly throwing them into battle.

What can I say, the demand for them was great. Mekhlis himself, being in the first half of July on the Western Front, immediately requested 15 groups of 500 people. He divided those who arrived from Moscow into companies (100 people each) and distributed them among the armies, while prescribing: "Companies should be poured into the most needy regiments in uniform groups." The stay of the army commissar of the 1st rank at the front gave him the opportunity to see with his own eyes that the political fighters really cement the personnel.

Today, after decades, it is clear that the political elite of the country imposed many false ideals on the masses of Soviet people, including the communists, and mercilessly exploited their enthusiasm. This can be deeply regretted, but who will take it upon himself to condemn people for illusions? Moreover, the outbreak of war in the minds of millions of our compatriots brought to the fore categories that are by no means false and not political - love for the Fatherland, readiness to give one's life for it. By virtue of their organization, discipline, conviction, the communists and Komsomol members, who made up the contingent of political fighters, favorably stood out from the soldier's milieu.

Subsequent mobilizations, and there were five more by the end of 1941, the Central Committee instructed the Main Political Directorate of the Red Army. The revealed archival documents testify: the head of the GlavPU perceived the formation of communist companies and battalions as one of the most important things. So, on July 13-14, he instructed the military councils of the North Caucasian, Ural,

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Telegin K.F. Wars are countless versts. M., 1988. S. 38.

Kharkiv and Moscow military districts on the call for five days for 500 people and their training. On July 20, a new order is given: the Moscow Military District is to mobilize 6 thousand people, the KhVO - 1.5, the Ural Military District - 1, in addition, the Oryol Military District - 1 thousand people.

Checks carried out in hot pursuit showed that many shortcomings were allowed in the formation of communist battalions: many fighters had to be seconded back for health reasons, there were cases of simulations and even desertion. On these signals, the necessary measures were taken. But not everything was within the power of the head of GlavPU. In September 1941, Stalin banned the issuance of weapons from the central arsenals for communist detachments. No matter how Lev Zakharovich tried to find out from the side why such a ban followed, he did not achieve clarity. Perhaps the leader decided that in these September days, when the thunderstorm situation near Moscow was thickening frighteningly quickly, weapons in the hands of professionals would be more useful.

In any case, Stalin's instructions put the political fighters in a difficult position: they often arrived at the front poorly, or even not armed at all. Nevertheless, the GlavPU of the Red Army resorted to their call in the future. In total, during the first six months of the war, 60,000 communists and 40,000 Komsomol members became such.

Concerned about saturating the army with political workers, Mekhlis at first walked from life, correlating his steps with the needs of practice. Already in early July, on the Western Front, it became clear to him that "the staffs of the political propaganda departments of the fronts did not meet the conditions of wartime," which he did not hesitate to inform Malenkov and his deputy Kuznetsov. First of all, "with the enormous importance of aviation and motorized mechanized troops in modern warfare, the propaganda departments of the fronts do not have corresponding departments, while the department of culture is completely redundant." Having introduced two new departments into the staff of the UPP of the Western Front and excluding one, the army commissar of the 1st rank proposed to reform the staff of the UPP and other fronts in the same way.

But soon he fell into an administrative rage, trying to cover literally all the links of the extensive army mechanism with a network of political workers. The positions of deputy chiefs for political affairs in the structures of the front headquarters were also introduced: in the departments - artillery, communications, military communications, auto brigade

non-tank and engineering, departments - personnel, logistics and road service, sanitary. In August, the head of the GlavPU instructed to introduce the post of staff commissar into the staff of tank brigades. In November, he issued an order to urgently appoint military commissars to a number of departments of the Moscow Defense Forces Directorate.

And even being in 1942 on a long, six-month business trip to the Crimean Front, Lev Zakharovich did not let these processes out of his sight. He instructed his deputy for GlavPU to introduce the positions of vacated secretaries of the party bureau to the staff of rifle battalions of separate rifle brigades. Reason: "In war, the combination of a company political officer with the post of secretary of the party bureau does not work."

Planting political workers literally everywhere, Mekhlis allowed an obvious overlap. In many cases, the introduction of more and more positions of political workers, especially in headquarters and management structures, was not dictated by a special need and only separated the scarce personnel from the front line.

Restructuring on a war footing was also required in organizational and party work. On June 28, by his directive to the members of military councils and heads of the UPP of districts, fronts and armies, the head of the GUPP determined the main tasks in this area: to create party commissions under the political propaganda departments (departments) of the fronts (armies); questions of admission to the Party are to be decided at meetings of the bureau and approved by the party committees of the formations, bypassing the meetings of the primary party organizations; accept for consideration the recommendations of party members who know the recommended less than a year; ensure that applications for admission are processed promptly.

It is noteworthy that in his directive he went against the requirements of the charter of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks, which provided for recommenders to work together or serve together with the recommended one for at least a year. Evidently, Lev Zakharovich managed then to obtain the verbal consent of the General Secretary of the Central Committee, because the "innovation" of the army commissar of the 1st rank was legalized only three weeks later. It was only on August 19 that the Central Committee gave instructions to facilitate the admission procedure for those who "particularly distinguished themselves in battle." If they presented recommendations from those party members who knew

<sup>1</sup>TsAMO, f. 32, op. 11309, d. 155, l. 60-61.

they are less than a year old, then in this case, according to the directive of the head of the GlavPU, an additional combat characteristic was required signed by the political instructor or commissar of the unit. Similar instructions were given in the wake of the decision of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks of December 9, 1941, which allowed the admission of servicemen who distinguished themselves in battles after a 3-month candidate experience.

Mekhlis and later persistently searched for how to increase the growth of party organizations, more successfully form an asset. Thus, in April 1942, from the Crimea, he sent a telegram to his deputy with a proposal to put before the Central Committee the question of holding elections of party organizers and bureaus by open voting in a combat situation. It is difficult to follow the charter, that is, to elect by secret ballot, at the front, Lev Zakharovich explained.

Improving the system of organizing party work, he naturally could not lose sight of the issue of personal exemplification of the communists and members of the Komsomol. Especially since reports of military crimes in the first months of the war showed that among the alarmists, deserters, and even deserters, a considerable percentage were party members and Komsomol members. The head of the GUPP considered it necessary to cite several such facts on July 15 in his directive to the military councils and heads of the UPP of the fronts, districts and armies. So, the secretary of the primary party organization of the 13th Corps Air Squadron, junior lieutenant Sapun, was ordered to capture the crew of that German aircraft, but "the alarmist and coward Sapun shamefully fled at the first shots of the enemy." During the battle, the commander of a platoon of the 50th rifle corps, communist junior lieutenant Petrochenko, fled to the rear. Moreover, the platoon, left without a commander, repelled all enemy attacks without losing a single person.

"A coward and an alarmist with a party or Komsomol card is the worst enemy, a traitor to the homeland and the cause of our Bolshevik Party," emphasizing this, Mekhlis obligated the heads of political propaganda departments and departments to take all measures to increase the vanguard role of communists and Komsomol members in the fight against the enemy. And the alarmists, cowards, deserters and defeatists "should be immediately expelled from the party and the Komsomol and brought to trial by a military tribunal."

An important activity of Mekhlis from the very beginning of the war was also the opposition to the Goebbels ideological machine. Certain experience of counter-propaganda struggle

If, as we remember, he received during local wars and conflicts on the eve of the Great Patriotic War, and he became convinced how much its success is connected with combativeness, offensiveness, appeal to the innermost feelings and thoughts of the soldiers and officers of the enemy.

Now they had to deal with a new and more sophisticated opponent. Shackled by the Treaty of Friendship and Borders with Germany, the secret protocols to the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact, the Soviet leadership, even confident that Berlin was enemy No. 1, could not publicly declare this until the very beginning of the war. As a reliable partner, a friendly country, our propaganda about Germany broadcast.

Of course, the picture should have changed immediately, as soon as Stalin was convinced that the dawn of June 22 brought not just a large-scale provocation, but a real war not for life, but for destruction. As General Burtsev recalled, he, together with the head of Voenizdat, Colonel P.F. Mekhlis summoned Kopylov immediately after Molotov's radio speech. The task was to immediately translate the statement of the Soviet government, which was made by the People's Commissariat of Foreign Affairs, into German, Romanian, Polish and Finnish and publish it in the form of a leaflet with a circulation of 3 million copies. "Translating, editing, typesetting and publishing — in a word, everything related to our first leaflet, I take under my personal control," said the head of the GUPP, ordering to report on the progress of work every 2-3 hours. At dawn on June 23, a 3 million circulation leaflet was already sent to the front for distribution among the enemy troops.

Mekhlis promptly approved the reorganization plan of the 7th department of the GUPP and its new staff list, gave instructions to the heads of the UPP of the fronts on the publication of leaflets and newspapers in the languages of the enemy troops. And in the future, he kept the release of such literature under tight control. In just two weeks of the war, it was published with a circulation of 90 million copies.

The head of the GUPP personally formulated slogans for the Finnish, Romanian, Hungarian soldiers, after which they were sent to the fronts for replication and scattering from aircraft. At his direction, all letters and documents from enemy servicemen containing a rich

counter-propaganda material were immediately sent from the fronts to Moscow. Here the political agencies should

We were also sending copies of political interrogations of prisoners of war (about the mood of the soldiers, the situation at home, etc.).

On June 25, the Soviet Bureau of Military-Political Propaganda began to operate, the main task of which was to deploy counter-propaganda among the enemy troops. It was headed by Mekhlis. The bureau included Deputy People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs S.A. Lozovsky, Deputy General Secretary of the Comintern D.G. Manuilsky, Secretary of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks, head of the Soviet Information Bureau A.S. Shcherbakov, academicians E.S. Varga, M.B. Mitin and others. Against their background, the head of the Main Political Directorate was not always up to par. His ambitiousness was unable to hide his lack of qualifications, made it difficult to heed the sound judgments of his colleagues and subordinates.

The author happened to meet several times with the already mentioned retired general Burtsev. During one of the conversations, Mikhail Ivanovich spoke about the reaction of Mekhlis to playing cards with pornographic images delivered among the trophy materials. Mekhlis took it into his head to attach political significance to this as a fact allegedly indicating the moral decay of the enemy army. He ordered the preparation of leaflets under the heading "How Hitler is corrupting his army." The Bureau categorically objected: they say that for the bourgeois army this is a habitual way of spending time, a game, entertainment, and therefore the use of pornography cannot be attached political significance. This conclusion was also confirmed by a survey of German prisoners of war in the Krasnogorsk camp.

"Mekhlis, however, did not listen to anyone," Burtsev said, "and the leaflets saw the light. As many as 11 million copies circulation. Already under his successor Shcherbakov, we urgently seized the stocks of these leaflets remaining at the fronts and destroyed them.

There were no authorities for Lev Zakharovich. A short story connected with the Secretary General of the Union of Writers Alexander Fadeev confirms that straightforwardness and categoricalness were often elevated to their dignity. On November 11, 1941 he telegraphed Fadeev, who was in Kuibyshev: "The army needs a collection of essays and stories dedicated to the Great Patriotic War. The fifth month of the war is underway, but they have not taken up this matter. I ask you to organize writers, prepare

to twist one collection of works of art within a month, and then work systematically in this direction. Do the same in the line of poets.

Apparently, there was no business reaction, and perhaps it could not have followed. From a personal letter from Fadeev to Stalin and two other secretaries of the Central Committee A.A. Andreev and A.S. Shcherbakov can see in what a painful moral situation the general secretary of the Writers' Union found himself: in the circles of writers, rumors were widely circulated about his stampede from Moscow in order to hide in the rear. What was it like to pass such accusations on a man who, back in the Civil War, went from an ordinary soldier to a brigade commissar, a participant in the storming of Kronstadt, twice wounded! Therefore, he, who was part of the nomenklatura of the Central Committee, asks to be released to the front as a correspondent or political worker.

Having received a copy of this letter from Alexander Alexandrovich, Mekhlis reacted with his usual straightforwardness. The head of GlavPU, if the reader remembers, even before the war, noticed in the author of "The Defeat" the desire to make capital out of past achievements. With a similar phenomenon, as it seemed to him, he encountered now. On December 13, he telegraphed Andreev, who was in Kuibyshev: "The writer Fadeev sent a telegram with a request to assist the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks in sending him to the front as a correspondent. It's like someone is bothering him. I ask you to transfer Fadeev for several months at the disposal of the Heads of the RKKA, and we will force him to serve the army with an artistic word. Mekhlis, as we see, did not change his pragmatic approach to literature and writers over the years. question at the end



In the end, it was resolved by the efforts of the secretary of the Central Committee Shcherbakov, who instructed to use Fadeev for further work in the Writers' Union and entrust him with the organization of a new newspaper, Literature and Art.

Lev Zakharovich took on many cases. But it is impossible to grasp the immensity — this truth is also confirmed by his example. Attempts to combine the performance of duties in several responsible positions at once turned into a formal performance of such duties, and even failures.

<sup>1</sup>TsAMO, f. 32, op. 11309, d. 98, l. 46-47, 91; d. 19, l. 292-295.

So, in August 1941, he joined the commission chaired by N.M. Shvernik on release and deferments from the call for mobilization. In September (together with Mikoyan, Shaposhnikov, Malenkov and others) - to the commission, which was supposed to reveal the true size of the army and determine who was entitled to what rations.

At first, Mekhlis was assigned a significant role in the organization of the partisan movement. In July 1941, together with Malenkov and the secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party (b) of Belarus P.K. Ponomarenko, he became a member of the commission created by the decision of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks to lead underground party organizations and "plant" them behind enemy lines. The direct leadership of the partisan movement was entrusted to the military councils and political agencies of the fronts. Already on July 16, Mekhlis issued a directive to his subordinates on the Northern, Northwestern, Western, Southwestern and Southern fronts "to take an active part in the selection of people and the creation of sabotage groups and partisan detachments. To provide all possible assistance to the regional committees and the Central Committee of the Communist Parties of the Union republics in arming these groups and detachments."

The military councils and political bodies of the fronts, according to another directive of the head of the GlavPU dated August 19, 1941, were to immediately staff the departments for political work among the population and troops of the Red Army operating in the occupied territory. They were charged with the duty to establish and maintain reliable communication with the party and Soviet bodies behind enemy lines, send their representatives there with leadership functions, publish and distribute newspapers and special literature.

Our hero was engaged not only in the political aspects of the partisan and sabotage movement behind enemy lines. So, in November 1941, he summarized the experience of organizing groups of hunters, or fighter detachments, on the Northwestern Front. In the conditions of a wooded and swampy area, they, made up of physically well-trained fighters and armed with small arms, grenades and mines, skillfully penetrated behind enemy lines and successfully acted on his communications. The Deputy People's Commissar of Defense, the head of the GlavPU was interested in who is involved in the selection of people for these detachments, how they are trained, what they

armed, etc.

In the future, the high workload of numerous cases in the GlavPU and the People's Commissariat of Defense, frequent business trips brought Lev Zakharovich out of the ranks of the leaders of the partisan movement. According to the documents, such a role has not been traced since the end of 1941. A similar situation is noted with the performance of the duties of the People's Commissar of State Control of the USSR.

Raising the masses to fight the enemy, Mekhlis and the bodies headed by him, however, were very afraid of the manifestation of a real initiative from below, no matter what good goals it was directed to. This was the law of the existence of a totalitarian state: everything must be under control, and any initiative from below should be the result of careful study at the top.

The head of GlavPU became aware of one initiative on the Southern Front. He immediately bursts out with a telegram addressed to the head of the PU front: "Without the sanction of Moscow, they began raising funds for the construction of a tank column named after the Leninist-Stalinist Komsomol. We do not support this idea of collecting funds for the construction of tanks in the ranks of the army. Energy must be directed to

improving the education of fighters, to intensify the defeat of the enemy, without being scattered on all kinds of illegal fundraising. Stop collecting."

On a similar occasion, they demanded an answer from the head of the political department of the 4th Army, Brigadier Commissar E.E. Koshcheev. It would seem that it did not contain any crime: "Raising funds for the tank column named after. Stalin and the squadron. Gastello was launched on the initiative of the army units. Nevertheless, on instructions from Moscow, the collection was stopped.

We would be sinning against the truth if we did not notice that in other cases, Lev Zakharovich was characterized by common sense, logic, and justice in assessing those who worked for victory. Well, this only proves his eccentricity.

He received a complaint from the secretary of the city committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks of the city of Ostashkov about the unauthorized actions of Major General A.A. Zabaluev, commander of the 252nd Infantry Division of the Western Front. In the area of st. In a hurry, the enemy felt a gap in our defense. Only the 252nd Rifle Division could stop it, but for this it had to be quickly transferred from the second echelon. The matter was resolved in a few hours. Zabaluev took responsibility and used the rolling stock without waiting for the permission of the military

ny. At the same time, he threatened the secretary of the district committee, who tried to interfere with him, with execution.

Mekhlis entrusted the investigation of the complaint to one of his subordinates, who reported that the facts, as they say, had taken place. But the operational actions of the divisional commander allowed the division to timely cross the Western Dvina and stop the attack on Torop. Reasonably believing that the winners are not judged, the head of GlavPU sent a report from his subordinate to the secretary of the Central Committee Andreev. And he attached the following note to it: "I am sending the results of the investigation into the actions of Major General Zabaluev. I don't think he should be punished. How do you look?

#### WITH INEVITABILITY AXES

Such cases, however, were rather the exception. The rule was categorical, peremptory in the assessments of people who fell under the hot hand of Mekhlis.

This was fully felt by his deputy army commissar of the 2nd rank V.N. Borisov. Less than three weeks after the start of the war, the head of the GUPP reported to Stalin and Molotov: "July 11 of this year. I, together with comrade Listkov (divisional commissar, military commissar of the Main Directorate of Personnel of the Red Army. - Yu.R.) talked with Borisov V.N. in connection with the materials received about his past.

In response to direct questions, Borisov admitted that he:

1. He hid his voluntary entry into the White Army and service in the 111th White Buzuluk Rifle Regiment for a year.
2. He hid his arrest by the Cheka in 1919-1920.
3. Concealed that his father was a priest (the teacher wrote everywhere).
4. He hid that he studied at a real school, because part of the realists of Buzuluk went to the whites ...

Before the outbreak of hostilities, Borisov ... was sent by Zaporozhets to the Baltic states. Military action captured him on the spot. With the onset of difficulties, Borisov was confused and independently arrived in Moscow. He spoke about the situation on the North-Western Front in such, in fact, defeatist tones that I was forced to strongly call him to order.

On the basis of all this, I gave an order to arrest Borisov. Arrest made. Previously, on this issue, I called comrade. Molotov".

The fate of the deputy Mehlis was decided. Having imputed him to conceal his past and thereby deceive the party and the Soviet government, the Military Collegium of the Supreme Court sentenced him to a five-year prison term with deprivation of his military rank. And this case, we dare to assure the reader, was not the only one.

The extreme suspicion of the army commissar of the 1st rank was strongly fueled by the situation in the summer and autumn of 1941: the retreat, and sometimes the flight of our units, mass desertion. And even - the facts of fraternization with the enemy. What Mehlis read in one of the reports received at the end of September from the political department of the Leningrad Front made him suffocate with anger. In the area of the Slutsk-Kolpinsky UR, in the 2nd company of the 289th artillery battalion, fraternization with the Germans took place for three days, 10 Red Army soldiers completely went over to the side of the enemy. At the same time - Mekhlis noted especially (underlining was preserved on the document) - neither the commander nor the commissar intervened in the events. What is called, they came ...

Unexpectedly, the number of those who fled from the front and lagged behind their units turned out to be large. Only from the beginning of the war until October 10, 1941] operational barriers of special departments and barrage detachments of the NKVD troops detained 657.4 thousand servicemen, 1020] of them were shot. the loss of both ordinary soldiers and venerable generals, many of whom Mekhlis knew personally.

Already in the first weeks of the war, while at the headquarters of the Western Front in Smolensk, he was forced to join the search for Marshal of the Soviet Union G.I. Kulik, who was sent on June 22 to help command the front and whose traces were soon lost. On July 9, the head of the GUPP received fresh information about the marshal, which he immediately sent to Stalin. Lieutenant Solovyov from the 88th border detachment of the NKVD, who had left the encirclement the day before,

| TsAMO, f. 32, op. 11309, d. 63, l. 61-62. ? RGANI, f. 89, op. 18, d. 8, l. 1-2.

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He lived that Kulik, together with a group of commanders of the 10th Army, had gone underground and was moving along the German rear in the direction of Osipovichi and Bobruisk. The last time Solovyov saw him was on June 30, when Kulik ordered the lieutenant to bring a group of border guards to his own and inform the Soviet command of his decision to break through to the front line.

"I am reporting the foregoing so that appropriate measures can be taken ..." Mehlis carefully explained. To suggest aloud that the marshal might be taken prisoner - even he did not dare to do so. In the end, Kulik managed to cross the front line and return unharmed to his own. True, they did not forget about this, and "bast" was inserted into the line of the guilty verdict in 1950, which was followed by the execution of Kulik.

Archival documents testify that Mekhlis also controlled the search for the battery commander of the 14th howitzer artillery regiment of the 14th tank division, Ya.I., who was surrounded by Stalin's eldest son. Dzhugashvili, which ended, however, in failure.

Lev Zakharovich fully supported and actively promoted the now widely known order of the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command No. 270 of August 16, 1941 "On cases of cowardice and surrender and measures to suppress such actions." Reasonably condemning the manifestations of cowardice, confusion, panic, voluntary surrender, the order at the same time cited unverified and erroneous facts about the behavior of a number of military leaders in battle. Mehlis knew this very well and nevertheless agreed with the injustice. On his desk, as Deputy People's Commissar and Head of GlavPU, copies of death sentences were placed almost daily. On July 26, the visiting session of the Military Collegium sentenced the commander of the 118th Infantry Division, Major General N.M. Glovatsky, and the commander of the 41st Rifle Corps, Major General I.S. Kosobutsky and his deputy for political affairs, regimental commissar S.I. Karachinov were sentenced to imprisonment in labor camps for 10 and 7 years, respectively. July 28 sentenced to

commander of the 9th Aviation Division, Hero of the Soviet Union, Aviation Major General S.A. Chernykh. On August 13, the same sentence was handed down to the commander

'APRF, f. 3, op. 50, d. 436, l. 1-2.

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14th Mechanized Corps of the Western Front to Major General S.I. Oborin. On September 17, the Military Collegium decided to put a limit to earthly existence to three at once - the commander of the 42nd Infantry Division of the Western Front, I.S. Lazarenko, to the chief of artillery of the same front, lieutenant general of artillery N.A. I also cry to the teacher of the Military Academy. M.V. Frunze to Major General S.M. Mishchenko.

In the interests of objectivity, it should be said that some of the military leaders had capital punishment replaced by detention in labor camps, and some later managed to escape to the front and distinguish themselves in battle. So, Major General Lazarenko, commanding a rifle division, on June 25, 1944, died heroically in the Mogilev region. He was posthumously awarded the title of Hero of the Soviet Union.

On the same days, the memorandum of the Chief Military Prosecutor of the Red Army, military lawyer V.I., lay on the table of Lev Zakharovich. Nosov, who revealed the "training" of the commander of the 28th Army, Major General V.Ya. Kachalov to "surrender". On August 4, as follows from the report of Nosov's assistant brigade military officer S.Ya. Rosenblit, who was specially sent to the 28th Army, was delivered to the Kachalov command post with fascist leaflets, which simultaneously served as a pass to the enemy. The general read the text aloud, asked if anyone needed this pass, and put the leaflet in his pocket. And an hour later he got into the tank and headed towards the village occupied by the Nazis.

In fact, the general's life was cut short by a shell that hit the commander's tank when he led his subordinates to a breakthrough. And with some effort, this fact could be established immediately. But who then wanted to understand the details? Stalin? Mehlis? When emergency order No. 270 required examples of treacherous actions, both Kachalov and the commander of the 12th Army, Major General P.G. Ponedelin, and the commander of the 13th Rifle Corps, Major General N.K. Kirillov (they were also accused of voluntarily surrendering to the enemy, although they were taken prisoner in an unconscious state and, being in captivity, did not make a deal with the Nazis). But the leader and his associates were more likely to be ready in advance to recognize these, as well as many other commanders and fighters, as cowards and traitors who "need to be destroyed", rather than trying to obtain indisputable information about their actual line of behavior.

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It is characteristic that people's rumor still connects the declaration of captured soldiers as "enemies of the people" precisely with Mekhlis (the latter, as the author of this "formula", according to Konstantin Simonov, was directly pointed out by Marshal Zhukov). Although there is no signature of the head of the GlavPU under order No. 270, just as there is no signature under other similar documents, but, as they say, the cap is on fire on a thief. Lev Zakharovich's zeal in implementing the cruel guidelines of the leader has become truly legendary. They knew he would stop at nothing. The shameful of the Mekhlis formula, according to Zhukov, was "in the distrust of the soldiers and officers that underlies it, in the unfair assumption that they were all captured because of their own cowardice."

It is appropriate to refer to the opinion of the Deputy Chief of the Central Headquarters of the partisan movement, Colonel I.G. Starinov, who met with Mekhlis on the Western Front as the head of an emergency operational and engineering group sent by the People's Commissariat of Defense to build barriers and undermine bridges. When a demolition officer had a bold proposal to make a raid on the German rear, the final decision on it was made by the head of the GUPP, who was also a member of the Military Council of the front. Lev Zakharovich listened to his interlocutor cautiously, suspiciously. He demanded complete data on everyone who asked to be behind enemy lines. "... I decided that I would not give any data to Mekhlis about sappers," wrote Starinov. —

What if someone goes missing in the occupied territory? In this case, his family will not do well. This cynical despot will remember everything."

Documents relating to the autumn of 1941, in our opinion, allow us to assume that Lev Zakharovich did not immediately come to the formula: "Everyone who is captured is a traitor." At the end of October, he received information that on one of the sectors of the front the Germans had resorted to frank infamy: going on the offensive, they let captured Red Army soldiers go ahead of them. When the enemy approached, the Soviet soldiers opened fire. The prisoners began to scatter, the Nazis began to shoot them from behind.

! Simonov K.M. Through the eyes of a man of my generation. P. 339. 2 Starinov I.G. Mines are waiting in the wings. M., 1964. S. 220-221.

In the Mekhlis directive of October 31 to all commanders and military commissars of the units, which outlined the circumstances of the incident, there is no attempt to analyze the situation. That in any case it was necessary to shoot at friendly people, Lev Zakharovich had no doubts. What are we talking about, if a month ago the leader himself blessed such a line of conduct when Zhdanov and Zhukov reported to him that near Leningrad the fascists were letting old men, women and children in front of their troops, in Stalin's terminology - "deputies". "They say that among the Leningrad Bolsheviks there were people who do not consider it possible to use weapons against such delegates," the Supreme Commander dictated in a reply telegram to Zhdanov and Zhukov. — I think that if there are such people among the Bolsheviks, then they should be destroyed first of all, because they are more dangerous than the German fascists. My advice: do not be sentimental... Hit with might and main on the Germans and on their delegates, whoever they are, mow down the enemies, it doesn't matter whether they are voluntary or involuntary enemies ...!"

Well, if the civilian population remaining in the occupied territory was declared "enemies" who should be "beaten with might and main", then the Red Army soldiers who were taken prisoner turned out to be such as if by themselves. Yet there was a nuance to Mekhlis's views. "In explanatory work, emphasize," the head of the GlavPU pointed out in the directive mentioned above, "that death in battle is better than shameful and painful captivity, which will certainly end in death. There should not be a single Red Army soldier who would not know about this provocation."

Other intonations than that of the leader are also heard in a leaflet written by an army commissar of the 1st rank on this occasion. The work of his thought is interesting, which can be easily traced by the amendments he makes to the text. He calls the captured Red Army soldiers comrade-brothers, sons of the great Soviet country, appeals to their civic and family feelings. Do not waste a single minute, use every opportunity to escape, he urges, and "we will meet you as brothers."

I would like to think that this is not a propaganda trick, that manifestations of humanity in relation to people who find themselves in a hostile

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Cit. by: Volkogonov D.A. Triumph and tragedy. Book. 2. S. 194-195. 2 TsAMO, f. 32, op. 11309, d. 21, l. 117.

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hard captivity, Lev Zakharovich then still preserved. Maybe because, unlike Stalin, he was constantly at the front, he knew the true army reality firsthand. And perhaps because in the fall of 1941 the scale of our losses as prisoners was not yet fully clear, which means that the degree of cruelty towards them was not yet of an extreme nature.

Nevertheless, it is hardly legitimate to talk about some fundamentally independent line of Mekhlis, different from the Stalinist one. Faith in the leader, in the correctness of his attitudes, rooted in the mind and soul of Lev Zakharovich from the distant 20s, these days only grew stronger. This is very clearly evidenced by his line of conduct during business trips to the troops.

Here, too, he by no means forgot about the role of "eyes and ears", and even the punishing hand of the leader, he was constantly tuned in to the fight, to identify enemies, to take emergency measures. Even pre-war experience showed the ruling elite that in an environment of social stress it is easier to manipulate the masses, it is easier to find a reason to write off any of your own mistakes, any of your own crimes as someone's "sabotage", or even "betrayal". There were also people who specialized in the role of the Stalinist ax - Yezhov, Beria, Vyshinsky, Shkiryatov ... And - Mekhlis. He was not aware of the height of the spirit that prompts a person to look for imperfection, first of all, in himself, to ask first of all from himself. Unconditionally and resolutely, with the inexorability of an avalanche rushing from the mountain or, if you like, a falling axe, he carried out instructions of a repressive nature. He was merciless, knew how to divert blame from the owner (and, if necessary, from himself), shifting it to others who were more humane, conscientious and weak.

Such specific qualities of Lev Mekhlis were demanded by the leader at the front already in the first, catastrophic days of the war, when the enemy took full advantage of the gross miscalculations of the Soviet leadership in determining the moment and main direction of fascist aggression. In the zone of the Western Front, by the end of June, the Nazis advanced to a depth of more than 300 kilometers, capturing a significant part of Belarus. The 3rd and 10th Soviet armies were surrounded, and the remnants of the 4th army retreated beyond the Berezina. On June 28, Minsk and Bobruisk fell. There was a threat of a quick exit of the enemy's mobile formations to the Dnieper and their breakthrough to Smolensk.

In search of the reasons for such heavy defeats of our troops, the sharp and cynical mind of the leader habitually prompted: in order to avert suspicion from oneself, it is necessary, without delay, to announce the names of the culprits. The choice fell on the command of the Western Front. At the very first meeting of the State Defense Committee, formed on June 30, the dismissal of Army General D.G. Pavlov from the duties of the front commander. He was first replaced by Lieutenant General A.I. Eremenko, and on July 2, People's Commissar of Defense Marshal Timoshenko. Chief of Staff of the Front instead of Major General V.E. Klimovskikh was appointed head of the operational department of the General Staff, Lieutenant-General G.K. Malandin. A member of the Military Council of the front instead of A.Ya. Fominyh was Mekhlis, who continued to be the Deputy People's Commissar of Defense and the head of the GUPP.

In the implementation of Stalin's plans to search for "switchmen", he was assigned a special role. It was he who ensured the arrest of General Pavlov, whom the leader hypocritically ordered to return to the front after the GKO meeting. About the circumstances of the arrest to the Belarusian historian E.G. Ioffe was told by the former head of the Gmel regional department of state security, retired colonel D.S. Gusev. At dawn on July 4, Mekhlis called him and gave the order to "intercept" Pavlov, who was heading from Mogilev to Gomel, when he was passing the town of Dovsk. Gusev arrived in Dovsk and learned here that the arrest of the general of the army would have to be carried out not by him, but by a group of senior NKVD officials who had previously arrived from Moscow. When Pavlov's car appeared, one of them stopped the car and suggested that the general go to the telephone, explaining the request by urgently calling Mekhlis. In the premises of the post office, the former commander of the Western Front was presented with an arrest warrant.

Pavlov himself testified during interrogation on July 7: "I was arrested on the afternoon of July 4 of this year. in Dovsk, where it was announced to me that I had been arrested by order of the Central Committee. Later, Deputy Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars Mekhlis spoke to me and announced that I was arrested as a traitor. |

Who exactly made the arrest? According to one version, which was reflected in the press not so long ago, this is not an employee of the NKVD, but a colonel of the Intelligence Directorate of the Red Army Hadji-Umar Mamsurov. His

Independent military review, 2003, December 5.

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The reader already knows: it was Mamsurov who, at the April meeting of 1940 in the Central Committee of the party, expressed doubts about the advisability of appointing Mekhlis, head of the RKKA PU, as a member of the military council of the 9th Army. And he allegedly received an order for arrest from Voroshilov, who had the appropriate

instructions from Stalin. It was, according to the author of the article by military journalist M.E. Boltunov, 29 June. And "he couldn't get out: cars with security to go for future high-ranking prisoners were already waiting ..."

Mamsurov knew Pavlov well from Spain, where they were at the same time, the first under the pseudonym "Xanthi", and the second - "General Pablo". According to the recollections of the scout, on June 27 he witnessed a conversation that took place between Voroshilov and another marshal, Shaposhnikov, who was also at that moment at the headquarters of the Western Front. So Kliment Efremovich told his interlocutor that he had instructions to remove Pavlov from command and send him under guard to Moscow. Boris Mikhailovich agreed that he was a worthless commander, but his arrest in this situation would be a mistake, he would not bring any benefit, but only cause alarm and confusion in the ranks of the commanders. Voroshilov, in a cipher composed later in the name of Stalin, asked the leader not to arrest Pavlov, but to appoint him commander of a tank group formed from retreating units in the Gomel-Rogachev area. But Moscow confirmed the arrest order, and the marshal gave the order to Mamsurov.

Hadji-Umar Dzhiorovich spoke about the arrest of the generals in the following way: "Pavlov himself came up first. He took off his belt with a pistol and, giving them to me, shook my hand firmly and said: "Don't remember dashingly, Xanthi, we'll probably meet in Mogilev sometime." Unlike last night, he was almost calm and courageous at that moment. Pavlov was the first to get into the car. The second to hand over his weapons was the chief of staff of the Klimovskikhs. We had never met him before. He was also calm, did not say anything and got into the same car. The third person who came up to me was a wonderful comrade, an excellent artilleryman, the commander of the artillery of the Klych district (the correct spelling of the surname is N.A. Klich. - Yu.R.). We knew each other very well in Spain and always talked like good comrades. He held out his weapon and hugged me with a smile. A few minutes later, a small column set off on its way to Moscow.

Despite the fact that the author of the article from which we quoted this quote refers to the use of GRU archival materials and previously unpublished records of Mamsurov, the picture of the arrest of the command of the Western Front remains contradictory and does not fully coincide with reliably established facts. Information about the date(s) and place(s) of the arrest of the generals, and about the persons who organized and carried out the arrest, remains unclear.

The materials at our disposal speak of an active role in the arrest not of Voroshilov, but of Mekhlis. He was sent to the Western Front specifically in order to, acting on the model of 1937, more reliably divert blame from the leader. To this end, he, in fact, fabricated an accusation of a conspiracy of a number of military leaders, allegedly because of whose treason and betrayal the Red Army was defeated in the first days of the war. The army commissar 1st rank not only determined the circle of new victims, but also formulated a plausible justification for the massacre of them. On July 6, 1941, Mekhlis with his own hand (the author saw these two pages in the archive from an office notebook with a characteristic Mekhlis handwriting) compiled and sent the following telegram to the Center:

"MOSCOW, KREMLIN, STALIN

The Military Council established the criminal activities of a number of officials, as a result of which the Western Front suffered a heavy defeat. The military council decided:

- 1) Arrest the former chief of staff of the front Klimovskikh, the former deputy commander of the Air Force of the front Tayursky and the chief of artillery of the front Klich[a].
- 2) Bring to court the military tribunal commander of the 4th Army Korobkov, the commander of the 9th air division Chernykh, the commander of the 42nd rifle division (rifle division. - Yu.R.) Lazarenko, the commander of the tank corps Oborin.

We ask you to approve the arrest and trial of the listed persons ... "

In addition to Mekhlis, the telegram was signed by the front commander Tymoshenko and another member of the military council of the front P.K. Ponomarenko, First Secretary of the Central Committee of the CP(b) Belorus these.

On the same day, they received a response:

"The State Defense Committee approves your measures to arrest Klimovsky, Oborin, Tayursky and others and greetings

these measures are accepted as one of the surest ways to improve the health of the front.

This gives grounds to say that Pavlov and his subordinates were arrested separately, and not together, as Mamsurov recalled. From the same memoirs it follows that the arrest was made at the headquarters of the front. However, it is documented that Pavlov was arrested in Dovsk.

If, as M.E. Boltunov, Marshal Voroshilov gave the order to Mamsurov to arrest Pavlov, Klimovsky and Klich on June 29, and to do this urgently, then, one wonders, who dared to delay his execution for five days, until July 4, and why the culprit did not suffer for delay no responsibility, although the order came from Stalin himself?

In no case are we going to cast a shadow on the memories of the legendary intelligence officer Khadzhi Umar Mamsurov. But until historians get a clear, consistent picture of how the last day of freedom for the command of the Western Front went, it is too early to put an end to this story. In the meantime, in our opinion, it says a lot that the organization and arrest of the generals were entrusted (it is possible that with the participation of Mamsurov) to Mekhlis, who, according to some information, arrived at the front headquarters on June 30, but at least not later than July 2, 1941.

The Stalinist envoy, knowing that no cruelty would be considered superfluous by his patron, acted rudely, juggled the facts, not even caring about the shadow of legality. At least the fate of Major General A.A. Korobkov. According to the memoirs of Colonel General L.M. Sandalov, who met the war as the chief of staff of the 4th Army, "although it suffered enormous losses, it still continued to exist and did not lose contact with the front headquarters." Why was it Korobkov who was convicted? Sandalov explained it this way: "By the end of June 1941, one army commander was destined for trial from the Western Front, and only the commander of the 4th Army was available. Commanders of the 3rd and 10th armies

! Anfilov V.A. The road to the tragedy of the forty-first year. M., 1997. S. 287—

were in these days, it is not known where, and there was no communication with them. This determined the fate of Korobkov.

After the arrest, the generals were subjected to severe torture and a trial was held over them. The military collegium of the Supreme Court, chaired by the notorious Ulrich, found Pavlov, Klimovsky, Grigoriev and Korobkov guilty of showing cowardice, inaction, indiscretion, allowing the collapse of command and control, handing over weapons and ammunition to the enemy without a fight and unauthorized abandonment of military positions parts of the front, thereby disorganized the defense of the country and created an opportunity for the enemy to break through the front of the Soviet troops?. They were sentenced to death, and on the same day the sentence was carried out. It was a massacre covered by a mock trial, because the verdict was a foregone conclusion, based only on the testimony of the defendants, no operational documents were involved in the proceedings and the testimony of witnesses was not heard. In September, General Lieutenant Klich was also shot.

After the 20th Congress of the CPSU, the Supreme Court returned to the case of Pavlov and his comrades in misfortune. The conclusion of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of the USSR was requested, in which



major shortcomings were recognized in the preparation of the ZOVO for war, but the accusation addressed to the district and front command of cowardice, inaction, deliberate collapse of command and control and surrender of weapons to the enemy was resolutely dismissed. All this allowed the court to issue a fair verdict.

By the decision of the Military Collegium of the Supreme Court of the USSR of July 31, 1957, the sentence of July 22, 1941 against Generals D.G. Pavlova, V.E. Klimovskikh, A.T. Grigoriev and A.A. Korobkov, as well as the verdict of September 17, 1941 against General N.A. The cry was canceled, and the proceedings against them were terminated due to the absence of corpus delicti in their actions.

This happened 16 years after the incident. And then, in the 41st, Mekhlis, doing his dirty work, did not just zealously fulfill the will of the leader. It was also his own style: both figures were related by the belief in repression as a universal remedy

' Historical Archive, 2006, No. 2. P. 61. 2 See: Military History Journal, 1992, No. 4-5. S. 20.

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of the catastrophic situation in which the country found itself largely through their fault.

That the situation was much more tragic than it was seen from Moscow, it became clear to the Stalinist emissary immediately upon arrival at the Western Front. He had big claims not only to the generals, but also to officers and ordinary soldiers. On the memorandum of the head of the 3rd department of the front, major of state security Begma, about the shortcomings in ensuring the combat operations of aviation and air defense units, Mekhlis emphasizes the words: “06/25/41, the defense of the Orsha airfield was not organized, there was no leadership...” It also described the panic in the 43rd Aviation Division on June 26, when the order to evacuate was received. Lev Zakharovich noted the following phrases: “The political apparatus of the division did not take any measures to prevent panic”, “Communists were not organized to fight panic”, “There are absolutely not enough rockets, incendiary and medium fragmentation bombs...” , “poor security and defense of airfields”.

The perpetrators, according to Mekhlis, should have responded harshly. Marshal Timoshenko also shared his determination to achieve a turning point at any cost. In the very first days, the new front command issued a whole series of orders that were supposed to cure the personnel of panic, cowardice, retreat moods.

The first of the orders is dated July 6, 1941 and concerns the prosecution for “manifested cowardice, desertion and treason” of the division commander of the 188th anti-aircraft artillery regiment, Captain Sbirannik, the head of the district military veterinary laboratory, military doctor of the 2nd rank Ovchinnikov, Major Dykman, commander of the 8th separate disciplinary battalion, and other servicemen. On July 7, a new order followed, punishing the inspector of the engineering troops of the Red Army, Major Umanets, for failure to comply with the order of the command of the Western Front to prepare for the explosion of bridges across the Berezina in case the Germans tried to use them and occupy Borisov. Umanets “criminally organized subversive work without ensuring the failure-free operation of the explosion”, as a result, the enemy crossed and occupied the city.

'TsAMO, f. 208, op. 2526, d. 5, l. 19-25.

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On July 8, three repressive orders were issued at once. Generals Korobkov, Chernykh, Lazarenko, and Oborin, already known to us, were tried by a military tribunal “for breaking an oath, displaying cowardice and inaction.” “For criminal acts, expressed in the surrender of materiel and ammunition to the enemy,” the commander of the 188th anti-aircraft artillery regiment of the 7th air defense brigade, Colonel Galinsky, and his deputy for political affairs, battalion commissar Tserkovnikov, were taken into custody and also tried. Two senior officers from the 16th Army -

lieutenant colonel M.A. Belai and Major R.D. Bugarenko, were put on trial "for spreading defeatist sentiments".

Ordinary Red Army soldiers and junior commanders were also taken into "hedgehogs". The directive of Mekhlis dated July 7, cited below, to the military councils of the armies that were part of the Western Front, in many respects anticipates the order of the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command No. 270 of August 16, 1941: print as presented in army and divisional newspapers ...

The most malicious deserters and alarmists convicted by the tribunal, I ALLOW: depending on the situation, to be shot in front of the ranks. In the latter case, prepare well. The presence of representatives of the PUARM, the prosecutor's office, the tribunal and the special department is mandatory on the spot ... "!

And here is a telegram to the military council of the 20th army, deciding the fate of a particular soldier: "Red Army soldier of the 438th GAP (howitzer artillery regiment. - Yu.R.) Ismailov Yunis Dzhambur oglu was sentenced to death for threatening a sergeant. I authorize the sentence to be carried out immediately before the ranks.

As we can see, the powers of the Stalinist emissary were given almost unlimited: the arrests of servicemen, regardless of their ranks and positions, and the executions, often only stamped retroactively by the tribunals, were supposed to intimidate someone, force someone to mobilize.

' The Hidden Truth of War: 1941. unknown documents. M., 1992. S. 302-303. 2 TsAMO, f. 208, op. 2524, d. 3, l. 48.

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#### IN THE TROOPS OF THE ACTIVE ARMY

No less time than in the office on the street. Kirov, in the building where the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command and the General Staff were also located during the war, Mekhlis spent in the troops of the army in the field. The fact is that he was one of the permanent advisers, whose institute was created at the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command already on the second day of the war. At such a tense moment, the Soviets, however, had to give way to action. Instead of advisers in the Headquarters, the institution of its representatives in the troops began to function on an implicit basis. In terms of their legal capabilities and functional duties, representatives of the SVGK differed markedly. In fact, only members of the Headquarters were its full representatives, acting on its behalf. The rest of the persons performed the role of representatives in each specific case. Their stay at the front was usually short, the main task was to clarify the situation, report conclusions on it, and help local commanders. Such an authorized Headquarters in 1941 was Mekhlis.

During the first six months of the war, he visited the Western (June - July), Central (August), North Western (September - October), Reserve and Western (October), Volkhov (December 1941 - January 1942) fronts, in the 30th 1st Army of the Western Front (November-December 1941). As a professional political worker, he was not assigned tasks related to command and control of troops. The element of Lev Zakharovich was different: the formation of units, political work, control and supervision of the highest command and political staff, an extremely frank report on the political and moral state to the very "top". In addition, the investigation of real and often imaginary misdeeds of various officials, the quick reprisal against those objectionable to the leader, and sometimes even to the head of the GlavPU himself.

In practice, Mekhlis acted as a personal representative of the Supreme Commander rather than as an authorized representative of the Headquarters. It is also impossible not to notice that at a distance from the State Defense Committee and the Headquarters, even under the condition of daily reports to Stalin, he acted more

independently than in Moscow. Accordingly, he allowed himself more often than usual, threats, pressure, arbitrariness.

Lev Zakharovich, however, could not but be aware that repressions alone could not improve the situation at the front. Required and weapons, and replenishment, and a calling word.

On July 5, he sends "lightning bolts" to military commissars to Kozelsk, Gzhatsk, Sychevka and other regional centers with a demand to assist the secretaries of district committees in finding out how much weapons and ammunition are in the district and central warehouses, is there anything left after the mobilization of the draft contingent.

At the same time, efforts were made to maximize the mobilization of extra people and equipment in the rear. Heavy fighting, the loss of control by many commanders, the withdrawal, and sometimes the flight of our other units from the front line, created disorder in the rear. On July 8, Mekhlis categorically demanded from the military councils and political propaganda departments of the armies of the Western Front "to establish strict order in the rear, clear them of idlers. All superfluous people should be sent to active units, and extra vehicles should be used to complete autobattalions... Deserters should be arrested and brought to justice."

In order to eliminate the "blood clots" on the railway, on July 6, he sends a telegram to the People's Commissariat of State Control of the USSR indicating: rear, unloading the arriving echelons... Report the results to me in Smolensk...", 2) to send inspectors at his disposal to revise all supply agencies, artillery units and ammunition supply services.

In the battles that unfolded in the front line, the junior command staff was catastrophically reduced. There was nowhere to take replenishment. Therefore, on July 9, Tymoshenko and Mekhlis issue a directive to the military councils of the 22nd, 20th, 21st, 13th, 4th, 19th and 16th armies: . The commanders of these units obviously do not understand that a serious and lengthy struggle is ahead (This is a characteristic confession. - Yu.R.) and that cadres are forged during the war.

Based on this, it was proposed: 1) to staff all active units with command personnel at the expense of their own resources, increasing, before

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of all those who distinguished themselves in battles, 2) remove supernumerary command personnel from units and create a reserve of the military council of the army, 3) remove excess command personnel from the rear, while replacing those capable of military service with non-combatants.

The contingent of political workers also suffered huge losses. In the units, the party layer has sharply decreased, therefore, the lever of influence of the command and political agencies on the personnel has weakened. And all this in an atmosphere of unequal battles, retreat, encirclement, and frequent panic. Already on July 2, 170 political workers were sent from Moscow to Smolensk at the disposal of Mekhlis, and on the 3rd - another 100. - lovek) of political fighters "to strengthen the party-political state of the units of the 4th and 13th armies".

Similar requests were constantly made in the future. Where and how this replenishment was sent, gives an idea of a telegram typical for those days signed by the head of the GUPP: "Military Council of the 22nd Army. Ershakov, Leonov. July 6 at 3:35 p.m. Five companies of political fighters have been sent from Moscow by echelon No. 6/148 to strengthen the political morale of the units. Each company has 193 Communists and Komsomol members, incl. privates - 81, junior commanders - 13, political workers - 4, commanders - 5. Companies are poured into the regiments most in need in uniform groups. Explain to the visitors their tasks. Report what has been done and the results. Similar telegrams went to the 21st, 4th, and 20th armies.

As an experienced journalist, the army commissar of the 1st rank took care of strengthening the front-line newspaper Krasnoarmeyskaya Pravda, appointing Vadim Kozhevnikov, Mikhail Matusovsky, Konstantin Simonov, Alexei Surkov as "literary writers" there. The front-line newspaper in German, designed for the enemy, underwent a significant reorganization.

A member of the Military Council of the Western Front often resorted to repressions and fear-mongering before cruel punishments. But even he could not fail to understand that, figuratively speaking, a whip is more effective in combination with a gingerbread. Most of the units, commanders and fighters did not run, but stood to the death, went over to counterattacks, showed exceptional courage and courage, which I noticed

and extremely stingy with praise Mekhlis. It is no coincidence that already on July 8, together with Timoshenko, he ordered the commanders of the armies of the front to urgently, sending reports by plane, present those who distinguished themselves for state awards.

As often happened with Lev Zakharovich, he did not have to see the fruits of his labor. On July 10, 1941, by the decision of the State Defense Committee, intermediate bodies of strategic leadership were created - the main commands of the troops of directions, including the Western one. The latter was headed by the leaders of the Western Front. The only exception was Mekhlis: on July 12 he was recalled to Moscow.

By this time, that is, in three weeks of the war, the fascist troops had advanced in the western direction from 450 to 600 km. On July 10-12, the enemy broke the resistance of our defending units in the Vitebsk region, south of Orsha and Mogilev, and began to move rapidly towards Smolensk. The gigantic battle of Smolensk unfolded across the entire zone of the Western Front.

The arrest of Army General Pavlov and other leaders of the front did not and could not change the situation fundamentally. If Stalin had been consistent, he, given that a turning point had not been reached at the front, should have dealt with Mekhlis in the same way that he treated the former front command. But the fact of the matter is that the head of the GUPP was sent there on a different mission. The leader, through the hands of his associates, achieved a very specific goal - to demonstrate to the military cadres the severity and inevitability of the supreme punishment, to show that even with the outbreak of the war, the foundations of power remained the same. And apparently, Stalin was convinced that this goal on the Western Front had been achieved by his emissary.

Therefore, with a similar mission, Mekhlis was sent as a leader to other fronts. A notable milestone in his activity as a representative of the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command was his stay on the North-Western Front from September 9, 1941, together with Bulganin, Deputy Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR, and General of the Army Meretskov. Mekhlis should be considered the key figure among them: Bulganin returned to Moscow ahead of schedule, and Meretskov, for whom this trip was the first after his release from prison, was already assigned to the Volkhov Front on September 17. Lev Zakharovich stayed here the longest, until October 2, 1941, closing the execution of the most important powers.

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The direction of the Headquarters of its representatives here was by no means accidental. Back in July 1941, the Supreme Commander-in-Chief reacted sharply to the report of the command of the North-Western Front about the withdrawal of troops and the abandonment of the cities of Ostrov and Pskov: visions, corps, armies and the front, parts of the North-Western Front are constantly rolling back. It's time to stop this shameful deed... Commander and member of the Military Council, prosecutor and head of the 3rd Directorate - immediately leave for the advanced units and deal with cowards and traitors on the spot.

However, no menacing shouts could suddenly negate the advantages gained by the enemy at the beginning of the war. Our troops continued to retreat, 15

August leaving Novgorod. The retreat, however, was not passive. Moreover, closing the way to Leningrad, the 34th Army and part of the forces of the 11th Army of the North-Western Front, with the active support of front-line and long-range bomber aviation, launched a surprise counterattack from the area southeast of Staraya Russa in a northwestern direction.

Unfortunately, as often happened at the beginning of the war, the 34th Army's counterattack was not adequately prepared: an acute shortage was felt, first of all, in aviation and air defense equipment. No weighty counterarguments were found to the enemy's counterattack, which managed to quickly transfer tank, motorized and aviation units to the Staraya Russa area. As a result, as a member of the Military Council of the 34th Army, Brigadier Commissar I.P. Voinov, by August 20, she, "having lost more than 50% killed and wounded, was so demoralized that she ran erratically." The army lost almost all of its artillery, out of 86 thousand people in service by August 28, according to this report, only about 20 thousand remained.

"It must be said," wrote the former commander of the front, General of the Army P.A. Kurochkin, — that the incompleteness of the counterattack of our troops near Staraya Russa is explained not only by their weak air cover, but also by the fact that command and control of formations, especially in the 34th Army, turned out to be far from adequate.

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As a result, the decision of the Supreme Commander-in-Chief, who had lost faith in the local military leadership, was born to use the hard hand of his authorized officers to ensure a favorable turn in this direction.

Bulganin, Mekhlis and Meretskov sent the first report to the Supreme Commander-in-Chief the day after they arrived at the North-Western Front. The situation that has developed here, they assessed as "extremely unfavorable." As a result of a new breakthrough by the Germans, Demyansk was captured on September 8, the enemy, spreading to the north, reached the rear of the 27th, 34th and 11th armies. A threat was created to Valdai and the rear of the Novgorod Operational Group. Meanwhile, the front was weakened: most of the divisions were extremely small, and there were no tank units. There was an urgent need for at least a tank brigade and three battalions and one fresh rifle division. "Front Commander Kurochkin (who had replaced Major General P.P. Sobennikov just two weeks earlier—Yu.R.) has not yet mastered the situation. The headquarters of the front (it was headed by Lieutenant General N.F. Vatutin. - Yu.R.) does not know the exact location of the divisions and their actions, "the authorized Headquarters completed their report.

The situation urgently demanded to stabilize the front line, strengthen positions and prevent the enemy from breaking through to Vyshny Volochok, from where he could bypass the Soviet formations stationed near the Volkhov River. Most of all those who arrived from Moscow, according to Meretskov's memoirs, were disturbed by the left flank of the 11th and the entire sector of the 34th armies. On the one hand, it was here, in a relatively dry place on the way to Krestsy, Valdai and Bologoye, that one could most likely expect another German strike. On the other hand, the front headquarters had no connection with the command of the 34th Army.

The second echelon of the army headquarters was discovered on September 11 in the rear of the front near the village of Zaborovye. Here were the commander - 34 Major General K.M. Kachanov and Chief of Army Artillery Major General of Artillery V.S. Goncharov. "Both of them," writes Marshal Meretskov, "knew nothing really about their troops and looked confused."

The commander published his memoirs a quarter of a century after the events described, time, of course, smoothed their sharpness. Not all

Meretskov K.A. In the service of the people. M., 1968. S. 218.

then it was allowed to speak. What is left beyond the memories? General Kachanov was charged with the fact that, contrary to the order of the front commander, he arbitrarily ordered to withdraw from

occupied boundary of the river. Shalkovka, r. Polomet, Kostkovo, Tobolka, r. Paul. Having lost control of the troops, he abandoned them and "shamefully went to the rear." (The inability of Kachanov to lead such a large formation was pointed out in a letter to Stalin by a member of the Voinov military council, describing him as a "rude martinet", who, except using a "three-story mat", does not talk to his subordinates and "beats the face" of many "). As for General Goncharov, he showed "complete inactivity in the withdrawal of the materiel of the artillery", moreover, "cowardly ran away to the rear" and "drunk" for two days.

On September 12, Stavka representatives reported to Stalin on the results of the investigation into the actions of the command, including the arrest of Kachanov. Meretskov is cunning when he writes in his memoirs: "L.Z. Mekhlis reported to the Headquarters about his behavior, and this was the end of the commander's career, "the report to the Supreme Commander bears the signatures of all authorized officers, including Kirill Afansievich himself. Here, Stalin was informed about the execution of Major General of Artillery Goncharov.

Perhaps, in that war, no one else dared to shoot a general in front of the formation without trial. And the head of the Main Political Directorate, without hesitation, went for it. Here is the text of the order to the troops of the front No. 057 dated September 12, 1941, drawn up personally by Mekhlis: "... For the cowardice shown and personal leaving the battlefield to the rear, for violating military discipline, expressed in the direct failure to comply with the order of the front to withdraw to help the units advancing from the west, for not taking measures to save the materiel of the artillery, for the loss of military appearance and two days of drunkenness during the fighting of the army, Major General of Artillery Goncharov, on the basis of the order of the Supreme Command Command No. - mandirs of the headquarters of the 34th Army.

The document was drawn up retroactively to give legal grounds to the personal arbitrariness of the head of the GlavPU of the Red Army. Here is what retired colonel V.P. told the author. Saveliev, former  
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TsAMO, f. 32, op. 11309, d. 51, l. 11-12.

detainee of the execution of General Goncharov. By order of Mekhlis, the employees of the headquarters of the 34th army were lined up in one line. The representative of the Headquarters with a quick, nervous step walked along the line. Stopping in front of the chief of artillery, he shouted: "Where are the guns?" Goncharov vaguely waved his hand in the direction where our units were surrounded. "Where, I ask you?" - Mekhlis shouted again and, after a short pause, began the standard phrase: "In accordance with the order of the People's Commissar of Defense of the USSR No. 270 ...". To carry out the "sentence" he called for a tall, right-flank major. He, risking, but unable to overcome emotional unrest, refused. I had to call a squad of soldiers ...

The very next day, Mehliis became interested in how impressed this extreme measure was. Head of the Special Department of the NKVD of the North-Western Front, Commissar of State Security V.M. Bochkov reported to the Stavka representative about the reaction in the 34th Army to the execution of General Goncharov. Most of those present at the execution approved of it, Bochkov reported. Like, that's how Goncharov needs it, it's time to take action, the drunkard left the army without artillery. But the deputy chief of the operational department of the army headquarters, Major Vasiliev, said: "Today's execution completely killed me ... After all, it's not his fault (Goncharov), someone is running, someone is dropping weapons, and someone has to answer." .

Who dared to go "out of step"? The head of the special department explained: "Vasiliev is characterized from the negative side as a coward. We carefully check the data on Vasiliev."

Contrary to Meretskov's assertion, in these same September days, not only the career ended, but the very life of General Kachanov. Having dealt with General Goncharov, the head of the GlavPU instructed to condemn to death the Commander-34, which the military tribunal executed on September 26 in the presence of Mekhlis. The author has the testimony of retired colonel M.I. Skrygin, who served as an officer for assignments from the headquarters of the North-Western Front. In the late 1950s, Generals Kachanov and Goncharov were posthumously rehabilitated.

The arrival of such a high commission from the Center to the fronts was almost invariably accompanied by such extraordinary measures, otherwise, according to the gloomy tradition of 1937, the inspectors would already risk incurring accusations of softness.

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Suffice it to recall, for example, the commission of the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command, headed by Molotov, to the Western Front in October 1941, when the threat of execution hanging over his commander Konev was only averted by Zhukov's firm position. The lives of people, albeit guilty, but not deserving such a harsh fate, were sacrificed to the reputation of high Moscow emissaries.

Lev Zakharovich took it upon himself to review the certificates for the "compromised", in his words, commanders of formations and units of the 34th Army, prepared by the head of the special department, captain of state security Belkin. The results of the review are evidenced by Mekhlis's edited (together with Bulganin and Kurochkin) report to Stalin dated September 24, 1941: "The division commanders 33rd Rifle Major General Zheleznikov, 262nd Rifle Major General Kleshnin and 54th Cavalry Colonel Waltz did not cope with command during the operations of the 34th army in August and the first half of September, they showed lack of will, confusion and inability to manage units, as a result of which they lost divisions ... We removed them from command of divisions. We consider it possible to appoint them to the positions of regimental commanders in order to expiate their guilt (emphasis added by Mekhlis. - Yu.R)."

The Supreme Commander was also informed about the arrest of the head of the 12th construction department of the NKVD Glavgidrostroy P.G. Ryzhkov and chief engineer V.G. Andreyanov, who were blamed for leaving the scheme of defensive structures around Valdai in the hands of the enemy.

The authorized staff of the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command dealt with the command personnel simultaneously with the restoration of the combat capability of the units. At the expense of the rear units, the 188th rifle division was formed, however, poorly armed. Realizing that these forces could not cover the Valdai direction, Mekhlis and other representatives of the Center set about restoring the 163rd and 33rd rifle divisions (from the 34th Army), in which only 500-600 people remained after the last battles. . To staff the divisions, on September 15, they requested from the Supreme 24 marching rifle companies with weapons, eight marching special companies, three tank battalions, two artillery regiments of rifle divisions with materiel, 54 guns of 45-mm caliber, 324 heavy machine guns and other weapons.

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On September 21, Bulganin and Mekhlis reported that the 25th Cavalry Division was being restored on the spot, however, without artillery, armored vehicles and heavy logistics. To ensure its combat readiness in a week, authorized Headquarters asked for help with mortars and automatic weapons.

Mekhlis directly contacted the heads of military branches and the main departments of the People's Commissariat of Defense. Immediately upon arrival at the North-Western Front, he asked the head of the Main Directorate for the formation and staffing of the Red Army, army commissar of the 1st rank E.A. Shchadenko 750 junior commanders, at the head of the Main Directorate of Personnel of the NPO, Major General A.D. Rumyantsev - three division commanders, eight division chiefs of staff, eight commanders and 12 regimental chiefs of staff, 600 commanders of various degrees, and others. Head of the Main Directorate of Communications of the Red Army, Lieutenant General of the Signal Corps I.T. Peresyppkin undertook to send radio specialists and means of communication, the head of the Main Military Chemical Directorate, Major General of the Technical Service P.G. Melnikov - five companies chemical protection.

At the request of Mekhlis, companies of political fighters arrived at his disposal in large numbers. "In no case should communists and Komsomol members be reduced into compact groups," he gave such a directive to the commander and head of the political department of the Novgorod group of troops, "but to have 8-10 people in each company so that each one influences a dozen non-party people, creating a combat active TIV".

All the "bottlenecks" were also swept out in their own rear, taking into account the fact that due to fierce fighting, primarily in the Moscow direction, the Headquarters did not have any serious reserves. With the active participation of Lev Zakharovich in the front, it was possible to restore the staff strength of four rifle (33, 163, 182 and 188th) and two cavalry (25th and 58th) divisions, partially strengthen personnel of three more rifle divisions (245, 259 and 262nd).

This man had enough strength and energy for many things: he even delved into what is sometimes considered to be not very important for a leader of this rank. "I am sending a good orchestra for the division," he telegraphed on September 24 to the commander of the 163rd Rifle Division, Colonel G.P. Popov. - Let it not be idle and

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front. The enemy must also tremble at the sounds of the Soviet march." From his deputy at GlavPU Kuznetsov, he demanded to send four companies of communists, send a sound broadcasting station, equipment for three printing houses and ... 100 harmonicas.

Taking care of the cheerful mood of the people, the head of the GlavPU was all the more concerned about the cleanliness of the army ranks. By his order, the military councils of all the armies of the front had to remove the personnel of the "Baltic nationality" from the units within three days. Fears that such servicemen could betray had good reason, as shown by the events of the initial period of the war.

Commissars of units and heads of special departments of the NKVD were also ordered to conduct a political check of all women employed in headquarters, warehouses, supply stations, hospitals within three days, on the grounds that often "the enemy uses women as agents."

The experience of restoring formations and units that suffered serious losses, which Lev Zakharovich acquired on the North-Western Front, was very useful to him in the future. For, returning to Moscow on October 2, he stayed here for only one day on his way to the troops of another, the Reserve Front.

Recall that only a few days before this, the Nazis launched a general offensive against Moscow, the defense of which the Stavka entrusted to the Western, Reserve and Bryansk fronts. On September 30, the troops of the Bryansk Front were the first to feel the powerful blow of the enemy. And already on October 7, in the Vyazma region, significant forces of two other fronts, the Western and the Reserve, were surrounded. It must also be taken into account that by that time the Headquarters near Moscow did not have large reserves.

In this critical situation, Mekhlis ended up on the Reserve Front, part of whose armies were deployed behind the battle formations of the Western Front and formed the second echelon of troops in a strategic defensive operation. The creation of a defense in depth and the equipment of rear defensive lines acquired particular importance. Meanwhile, the army commissar of the 1st rank, almost immediately upon arrival, witnessed the biased report of the headquarters of the Reserve Front to the General Staff that the Yukhnov-Maloyaroslavets highway was saddled by a certain division, which in reality was not in the specified area. More visually

It was hard to imagine any evidence of confusion, confusion and irresponsibility.

What can I say if, according to the testimony of Marshal Zhukov, these days even the commander of the Reserve Front, Marshal Budyonny himself, did not accurately imagine the location of the troops and headquarters entrusted to him. A most dangerous situation for the Soviet capital was created: by the end of October 7, all roads to Moscow were open.

On the morning of October 8, Zhukov, sent by the Supreme Commander-in-Chief to clarify the situation and take urgent measures, found Mekhlis at the headquarters of the Reserve Front. He "talked on the phone and scolded someone great." Their meeting can not be called cordial. If anyone for the whole war and



doubted the authority of Zhukov, then it was just the head of the Main Political Directorate. To remove all misunderstandings, the general of the army had to be reminded that he was a member of the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command and had arrived on behalf of the Supreme Commander-in-Chief in order to sort out the current situation. Mehlis was forced to "besiege back." When Zhukov asked such a vigilant and stern interlocutor a question about the situation of the troops of the Reserve Front and about the enemy, he, as Georgy Konstantinovich recalled, was able to give very little concrete information. He only noticed: "Now I am collecting those who leave in an unorganized manner. We will rearm at the assembly points and form new units from them."

He took on similar functions after the unification of the Reserve and Western Fronts into a single, Western Front on October 10. Having examined the rear structures, on October 13, Mekhlis telegraphed the new front commander, General of the Army Zhukov, and Bulganin, a member of the Military Council: "Communication Maloyaroslavets-Podolsk does not have any rear protection. On the whole way you will not meet a single barrage detachment. This makes it easier for deserters of all kinds to seep into the rear. The reserve front did not have its own rear guard, it was served by the Zapfront. I will take possible artisanal measures here."

At the same time, Lev Zakharovich informed about the "intensified work" on the restoration of five rifle divisions - 60, 17, 149, 53 and 113. They were restored both by merging the remnants of

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Zhukov G.K. Memories and reflections. Book. 2. S. 209.

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it suffered heavy losses of formations, and due to marching replenishments. The terrible hunger for reserves at that moment is evidenced by the fact that the 53rd and 113th rifle divisions were thrown into battle in a few days, without completing the formation, in a "raw form", as the Headquarters authorized himself admitted. Defensive battles on the outskirts of the capital required more and more units. Mekhlis himself had a chance to take part in these battles in the area of Maloyaroslavets and Naro-Fominsk.

He lived with worries about the defense of Moscow, and then about preparing for a counteroffensive, until December. He, as Deputy People's Commissar of Defense, was entrusted with the duty to identify in units, institutions, warehouses and withdraw surplus weapons. In late November - early December, Lev Zakharovich sent telegrams to the heads and military commissars of the NPO departments, the commanders of the troops of military districts, the heads of military bases of the Main Artillery Directorate, warehouses and arsenals (almost 50 addressees) with instructions to complete a re-registration of the existing rifle and artillery weapons, threatening legal liability for concealment. Having received the requested information, he gave the order to withdraw the vast majority of weapons.

Here is a typical example: on a report that the command staff of the headquarters of the Main Directorate of Logistics of the Red Army, stationed in Kuibyshev, has 100 Nagant revolvers, Mekhlis imposed a laconic resolution: "Surrender". The weapons, judging by the telegrams exchanged between the deputy commissar and the leadership, were used to equip the 30th and 1st shock armies of the Western Front. (According to the record of weapons stored in the secretariat of the GlavPU of the Red Army on December 4, 1941, Mehlis had three units - a German submachine gun, a Mauser and a Walter. His deputy Kuznetsov also had three. I wonder if they shared are they at least partially weapons themselves?)

During the preparation and conduct of the Moscow offensive operation, Mekhlis, together with Malenkov, had to ensure the airlift from Leningrad of artillery pieces and mortars produced there. There were not enough planes, so at the insistence of Moscow, return flights of TB-3s and Douglasses were used, transporting food to the besieged city.

Because of this, however, it was necessary to suspend the export of workers and engineering and technical workers from Leningrad.

"Is it really impossible to specially allocate aircraft for this business?", A.A., a member of the military council of the Leningrad Front, asked a bitter question. Kuznetsov and secretary of the city party committee Ya.F. Kapustin, who negotiated with Mekhlis and Malenkov. The answer was in the spirit of the times: "We will try to do our best... I repeat that we really need mortars."

From October 19, 1941, Mekhlis represented the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command again in the northwestern direction. This time he was engaged in restoring the combat capability of the formations of the 52nd Army, Lieutenant General N.K. Klykov. The army was directly subordinate to the Supreme High Command and was deployed at the end of August 1941 along the eastern bank of the Volkhov River to ensure the junction of the left flank of the Leningrad Front with the North-Western Front. For two months of fighting, units of the 52nd, as well as the neighboring 4th Army, were pretty battered. Therefore, when on October 16 the enemy, having a numerical superiority, went on the offensive on the Volkhov sector of the front, he managed to break through the defense. At the junction of the 4th and 52nd armies, a gap was formed through which the main forces of the German troops rushed to Budogoshch - Tikhvin. Part of the formations turned to the southeast to Malaya Vishera, which was closed by units of the 52nd Army.

As soon as he arrived here, the representative of the Headquarters, in his usual style, vigorously asked the officials of the People's Commissariat of Defense: he demanded marching reinforcements, weapons and warm uniforms. Asking Deputy People's Commissar of Defense Shchadenko to send a reserve regiment and five thousand trained fighters without rifles as soon as possible, he informs: we will be able to arm them with weapons from our own rear. In pursuance of the directive of the head of the Main Political Directorate dated October 22, 8 companies of political fighters without weapons were also immediately sent from the Ivanovo military-political school to his disposal.

Operational measures, mainly the rapid transfer of reserves, allowed the troops of the army of General Klykov on October 24 to detain the enemy east of Malaya Vishera. The troops of the 4th Army stopped the enemy on the outskirts of Tikhvin. True, not for long. On November 1, the attack on Tikhvin was resumed, and on the 8th the city

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fell. The control of the 4th Army was disrupted, the enemy went into the rear of the 54th Army of the Leningrad Front.

The fighting was extremely tense, our troops suffered heavy losses, besides experiencing an acute shortage of weapons, ammunition, and warm clothing. The Stavka authorized officer ordered, as they say, to clean out all the "bottlenecks" with a hard broom. Here is a clear evidence of this: in the rear parts of the small garrison of the Verebye station, the following were seized: self-loading rifles - 1, three-line rifles - 86, small-caliber rifles - 8, carbines - 10, light machine guns - 1, etc. A similar seizure was made in other garrisons.

"The light machine guns sent by Yakovlev (the head of the GAU. - Yu.R.) did not arrive. Tight now with rifles. There is absolutely no place to get mortars," Mekhlis informed Stalin on November 3. At the same time, an important, in our opinion, detail can be traced that characterizes the business style of the representative of the Headquarters: the above words of the report should least of all be taken as complaints and evidence of helplessness. Quite the contrary: Lev Zakharovich expressed the request for the same mortars at the end of the telegram and, as it were, by the way. And in the foreground is a report on what has already been done, including at the expense of local reserves.

There was a restoration of four rifle divisions (instead of three, as previously thought) - 111, 267, 288 and 259th. Of the 10 thousand people sent to replenish them, more than a third were "pumped out", in the words of Mekhlis, from their own rear units and institutions. "Weapons were confiscated from the rear - 4462 rifles, 98 light and heavy machine guns, one mortar, two PPDs ... In addition, the divisions seized 562 rifles from their rear." Lev Zakharovich was not afraid of being reproached for diverting the attention of the Supreme Commander-in-Chief to a hundred or two rifles, two

machine gun, the only mortar. For he knew that he was not begging for weapons from Stalin, that he would definitely like it.

In the same report dated November 3, Mekhlis informed about the removal of 56 people from the divisions "in the order of cleaning". This was the result of an order he gave to the military commissar of the headquarters of the 52nd Army within two days to remove all Germans without exception from units and institutions,

'TsAMO, f. 32, op. 11309, d. 21, l. 47-4706.

Estonians, Finns, Latvians, Lithuanians. The work was ordered to be carried out under the guidance of commissars and political agencies with the obligatory participation of special departments.

The Supreme Commander was also informed about measures to combat "cowards, deserters, and those who left their materiel without a fight." By order of the troops of the 52nd Army, drawn up by the hand of Mekhlis and signed, in addition to him, by the commander of the army and a member of the Military Council, for these reasons, in front of the formation of the 844th anti-tank artillery regiment, the commander of the 5th battalion, Lieutenant Vershinin, and the military commissar, political instructor Bayushenko, were shot.

Nothing escaped the attention of the Headquarters representative: neither the front-line newspaper ("it needs to be treated", and therefore "send a writer and two good journalists"), nor a printing house for the newspaper, nor an opportunity for personnel to watch a movie ("give me a couple of - moving cinemas"), or even dance at your leisure ("in the 111th division, which was recreated by local forces and with the help of Moscow, there is not a single harmonica. The people perked up, they want to dance. Send at least a hundred harmonicas to the 52nd army") . Here's another twist on the subject. "General Staff. Vasilevsky, Bokov, - telegraphed Mekhlis on November 3. "Does the Military Council of the Separate Army have the right to award those who distinguished themselves in battle?" And, apparently, he was very upset when he received the following answer: "The Military Council of the Separate Army has no right to award orders to those who distinguished themselves in battles."

Well, in this case, there were other ways to encourage those who perform military duty not out of fear, but out of conscience. Together with Commander General Klykov, the army commissar of the 1st rank ordered the commanders and commissars of the divisions that were part of the 52nd Army, the chiefs of artillery and rear services of the army, to strictly ensure that by the 24th anniversary of the October Revolution, all those holding the positions of junior commanders and the established military ranks were appropriated to their purpose. It was also necessary to ensure that the next ranks were awarded to the command staff without delay. It was proposed not to be shy about conferring titles on an extraordinary basis to those who especially distinguished themselves.

According to our observation, throughout the past months of the war, Mekhlis was looking for levers that would make people demoralized by heavy defeats come to their senses, believe in their own strength, and fight stubbornly and stubbornly. Following Stalin, he most often

gave priority to the threat of cruel, merciless punishment. At the front, they recalled, as Lev Zakharovich often repeated: they say, look at the old coachmen. They love and pity horses, but their whip is always stuck with a candle - at the ready. The horse sees this - and draws conclusions. That's the whole theory...

Nevertheless, it would be biased not to see the attempts of the head of the GlavPU to turn to the mobilizing effect of the invocative printed and oral word, various incentives. He also understood that the best way to strengthen the morale of fighters and commanders was to win faster. Let a small, private, but still a victory.

Mekhlis had a chance to visit the region again. Events in the northwestern direction in the second half of November-December acquired a special dynamic. During the Tikhvin offensive operation, which began on November 10, the 4th and 52nd armies were united into the Volkhov Front under the command of General of the Army Meretskov. The Headquarters of the All-Russian Supreme Command set the task for the troops of the front to continue the offensive in order to defeat the German group blockading the city on the Neva together with the Leningrad Front. "Not content with directives," Meretskov later recalled, "Stavka at the end of December

sent her representative L.Z. to the Volkhov Front. Mehlis, who hourly urged us".

Not only them alone. The author identified about 25 telegrams sent by Mekhlis to the Main Artillery Directorate of the People's Commissariat of Defense, the Main Directorate of Defense, the GlavPU, Deputy People's Commissar of Defense Shchadenko and other recipients in just two days - the last one in 1941 and the first one in 1942. The high intensity of his contacts with Moscow was also noted in the following days. Ensuring the timely arrival of reinforcements and the supply of troops remained the main concern of the Stavka plenipotentiary. So, having checked the situation in the 4th Army, Mekhlis telegraphed on January 4 to the head of the Logistics of the Red Army, General Khrulev: "The situation with food supplies is intolerable. As of January 2, according to the data of the Logistics Directorate, in units and warehouses of the army, meat - 0, vegetables - 0, hay - 0, canned food - 0, crackers - 0 ... In some places they give out 200 grams of bread ... What is here - handlessness or conscious enemy work?

Organizational conclusions followed such telegrams. In particular, the head of the rear of the neighboring, North-Western Front, suffered

Neral N.A. Kuznetsov. Under pressure from Mehlis, he was sentenced to death, which, however, was replaced by the demotion of the general to the rank and file! You could say he got off lightly.

The representative of Moscow gave a lesson in personnel work to the head of the political department of the front, P.I. Gorokhov: "You took up to twenty political workers from the 4th Army. I told you about two types of leaders - one destroys subordinate units and creates prosperity for himself in the bureaucratic apparatus, the other gives all the best to regiments and divisions and creates a full-fledged army. You acted like the first group of leaders. Immediately second all the political workers taken to the 4th army. Do the same for 52 armies.

The assertiveness with which the representative of the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command resolved the issues of providing the Volkhov Front for the upcoming offensive was, as Meretskov and a member of the Military Council Zaporozhets believed, in the interests of the cause. On January 5, 1942, they even turned to Stalin with a request to extend the trip to Lev Zakharovich. Consent was obtained. But on January 13, a new command came from Moscow: to return urgently.

Deputy Mekhlis Kuznetsov, who transmitted the order, referred to a call from Malenkov, who allowed him to choose the means of transportation to Moscow on his own. "But such means under which he would be unharmed. This was said from the owner's office and certainly his hint," Kuznetsov emphasized. "Is that clear to you?" It would not have been clear to Mekhlis that Stalin himself was following his return. It filled me with a sense of rare significance. Having set off by train and stumbled upon a traffic jam, Lev Zakharovich immediately made itself felt: he beat off the "lightning" with reproaches to the head of the VOSO of the People's Commissariat of Defense, General I.V. Kovaleva, arrested the head of the Bologoye station.

He was waiting for a new area of application of forces - the Crimea. The offensive of the Soviet troops, successfully launched there with a landing operation in the area of Kerch and Feodosia, bogged down. The Stavka trusted Mehlis to turn the situation for the better. There is hardly any doubt that this decision was the result of a high assessment by the Supreme Chief

Grachev L.P. Road from Volkhov. L., 1983. S. 228. 2? TsAMO, f. 32, op. 11309, d. 120, l. 304.

commander of his activities on those fronts where he was sent as an authorized representative of the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command.

Meanwhile, such activity was controversial. If the successful solution of specific tasks to restore the composition and combat capability of existing units and formations and the formation of new ones, to mobilize human and material resources deservedly received a positive response, then Mekhlis's impulsive assessments of a number of persons in the command and command staff of the Western, North-Western and other fronts, the manifest arbitrariness and lawlessness shown by him deserve severe condemnation.

## Chapter 7

CRIMEAN FRONT: WITH THE MANDATE OF THE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE STAFF OF THE Supreme High Command

### "WE WILL PLAY GREAT MUSIC TO THE GERMANS"

Mekhlis, who continued to be Deputy People's Commissar of Defense and head of the Main Political Directorate, was entrusted with the task of "providing assistance to the Caucasian Front in the Crimea region" as no longer just an authorized representative, but a full-fledged representative of the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command.

It should be borne in mind that by the beginning of 1942, the institution of representation of the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command was only taking shape, living practice - very complex, contradictory - determined the degree of responsibility of its representatives for affairs on the corresponding front, the range of their specific duties was identified, a mechanism was developed making and coordinating decisions with Moscow

and so on.

"Under emergency circumstances on one front or another, in the preparation of responsible operations, the Stavka sent its representatives to the front ... - recalled Marshal of the Soviet Union A.M. Vasilevsky. — It was a responsible job. Assess the capabilities of the troops on the spot, work together with the military councils of the fronts, help them better prepare the troops for the

operations, to establish interaction between the fronts, to assist in providing troops with supplies of everything necessary, to be an effective, connecting link with the Supreme Commander-in-Chief - this is just a short list of all the concerns that lay on the representative of the Headquarters.

The Supreme Commander was very demanding of our work. By the end of the day, by telegraph, the representative of the Headquarters was obliged to report on the situation at the front, to say what had been done over the past day!

The star of Zhukov, Vasilevsky, Voronov, and Govorov has not yet risen in this capacity; On the other hand, the experience of the first half of the war showed that the old military cadres in the conditions of modern warfare are no longer the magic wand with which the names of Budyonny or Voroshilov were associated in the previous two decades.

Looking ahead, let's say that the decision to send an unprofessional military man to the southern flank of the Soviet-German front. what Mehliis was, turned out to be a failure. It reflected a clear underestimation by the Supreme Commander-in-Chief of the acuteness of the situation that has developed in the region: it would be much more expedient to appoint here one of the capable military leaders of the new formation. There is no lesson from the failure of Marshal Kulik here, in the Crimea, in the autumn of 1941.

extracted.

Mekhlis arrived at the Crimean (until January 28, 1942 - Caucasian) front on January 20. The day before, during the Kerch-Feodosia landing operation (December 25, 1941 - January 2, 1942), our troops captured an important operational base on the Kerch Peninsula. The headquarters of the Supreme High Command gave the commander of the front, Lieutenant General D.T. Kozlov was instructed to speed up the concentration of troops in every possible way, allowing, in addition to the 44th and 51st armies, to transfer the 47th army to the Kerch Peninsula, and no later than January 12 to go on the general offensive. Our troops were supposed to strike from the bridgehead in the direction of the settlements of Dzhanikoy, Chongar, Perekop, familiar to Lev Zakharovich from Grazh

Cit. Quoted from: Leskov V.M. War and people. M., 1979. S. 134.

Danish war, and the Primorsky army was ordered to advance on Simferopol. The Black Sea Fleet was supposed to support the troops advancing on land with naval artillery fire and

landing.

Unfortunately, the Soviet command underestimated the strength and capabilities of the enemy. It was not possible to carry out the preparation of the offensive within the established time frame. The enemy, having, apparently, data on the plans of the command of the Caucasian Front, on January 15 delivered a preemptive strike. Having broken through the poorly organized defenses, on January 18 he captured Feodosia. Under the threat of loss was the bridgehead captured by the Soviet troops, from which, according to the plan of the Stavka, the liberation of the entire Crimean peninsula was to begin.

The main reason for the disruption of the offensive of our troops was the former commander of the 44th Army, Major General A.N. Pervushin saw in the absence of a thoughtful, clear logistical and combat support for the troops landed in the Crimea. There were not enough transport vessels for the transfer of manpower, artillery, and special units from the "mainland". With the provision of ammunition and fuel to the troops, as the military leader recalled, "the situation was simply catastrophic." The ensuing thaw brought field airfields into complete disrepair. There were no normal communications, air defense means.

As a result, after the capture of Feodosia by the Germans, General Kozlov was forced to make a decision to withdraw troops to the Ak-Monai positions, a defensive line about 80 km west of Kerch.

Under these conditions, to strengthen the leadership of the front, the Headquarters of the Supreme Command sent Mehlis here. Perhaps, for the first time, he received such a degree of independence in decision-making and influence on events on the scale of an entire front and, as it turned out later, for such a long, almost six-month period. Let us ask ourselves a question: what, in the opinion of the Stavka, should an army commissar of the 1st rank be doing here? He was not given any additional forces and means for the front, he did not bring any clarifications to the action plan of the troops. And when was it to do this: they sent him clearly

Pervushin A.N. Roads we didn't take. Ed. 2. M., 1974.

in fire order, assigning him the usual role of pusher, chauffeur. Along with him arrived the Deputy Chief of the Operations Directorate of the General Staff - Chief of the Southern Direction, Major General P.P. The eternal and military commissar of the artillery committee of the Main Artillery Directorate, divisional commissar P.A. Degtyarev.

To get an idea of the state of affairs at the front, the arrogant Mehlis "enough" two days. On January 22, he reported to Stalin: "They flew to Kerch on January 20, 1942... We found the most unattractive picture of the organization of command and control... Kozlov of the Comfront did not know the position of the units at the front, their condition, as well as the enemy grouping. Not a single division has data on the number of people, the presence of artillery and mortars. Kozlov leaves the impression of a confused and uncertain commander. None of the leading workers of the front has been in the army since the occupation of the Kerch Peninsula ... "!

The main provisions of this telegram were disclosed in detail in Order No. 12 of January 23, 1942, to the troops of the front, which analyzed the results of the unsuccessful battles for the Caucasian Front on January 15-18 and sent a copy to the Supreme Commander. An order signed by the commander of the front forces, Lieutenant General Kozlov, a member of the Military Council, divisional commissar F.A. Shamanin, as well as a representative of the Headquarters, stated that "the biggest shortcomings in the organization of the battle and in command and control" were made. After the successful completion of the landing operation in the area of Feodosia and the exit of units of the 44th and 51st armies to the river. The Churuk-Su troops did not entrench themselves on the reached line, did not organize an appropriate system of fire, vigilant military outposts, continuous reconnaissance and surveillance. The division commanders did not use the full power of artillery fire, they threw tanks in small groups on the unsuppressed anti-tank defense. Troop control from the army headquarters and below was poorly organized. The front headquarters did not know the true situation in the area of Feodosia. The main line of defense of the Kerch Peninsula - Akmonai positions - was p

The order named the names of senior and senior commanders who allowed the loss of command and control of the troops and the "shameful flight to

GTSAMO, f. 32, op. 11309, d. 139, l. 17.

rear", arrested and put on trial by a military tribunal on the orders of Mehlis. This is the commander of the 9th Rifle Corps, who temporarily acted as commander of the 44th Army, Major General I.F. Dashichev (released from arrest, then, re-arrested in July 1942, was imprisoned until July 1953. - Yu.R.), commander of the 236th rifle division brigade commander V.K. Moroz (in the order, the former military rank is named. Five days before that, Moroz became a major general. On February 18, 1942, he was sentenced to death and executed on February 22. - Yu.R.), military commissar of the same division, battalion commissar A.I. . Kondrashov, commander of the 63rd Mountain Rifle Division, Lieutenant Colonel P.Ya. Tsindzenevsky (in the order his surname was given incorrectly. He was later released from arrest and took part in the battles as the commander of the 77th mountain rifle division. - Yu.R.), head of the lithological department of the 404th rifle division N. P. Kolobaev and some others. At the same time, it was stated that repressive measures on the battlefield, as required by the order of the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command No. 270, were not applied to cowards and deserters, and there was no proper order in the military and army rear.

The order stated:

"1. The command of armies, divisions, regiments should take into account the experience of the battles of 01/15-18/42, immediately restore order in the units ... Have regimental artillery and anti-tank artillery in infantry combat formations ...

2. Alarmists and deserters to be shot on the spot as traitors. Those found guilty of deliberately wounding left-handed crossbows should be shot before the formation.

3. In a three-day period, restore complete order in the rear ... "

Mekhlis instructed to specifically check the state of the air force and artillery of the front, which decisively determined its combat capability. Serious shortcomings were revealed. Due to unsatisfactory logistics, 110 defective aircraft accumulated on the Kerch Peninsula, as a result, less than one sortie was made per day. The combat readiness of the proven 51st and 44th armies was also low.

In order to draw attention to the revealed shortcomings, the representative of the Headquarters, as in the first case, managed to issue orders for

GAPRF, f. 5, op. 50, d. 441, l. 32-36.

front, in which it was proposed to correct shortcomings within two days in order to actively prepare for a new offensive.

Lev Zakharovich acted with his inherent energy, pressure; he sought to use his capabilities as a deputy people's commissar of defense and a representative of the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command to the fullest. On the move, having given a low assessment of the front commander Kozlov, he took all the threads of control upon himself. Conducted almost continuous negotiations by telegraph with the Headquarters, the General Staff, the main departments of the People's Commissariat of Defense.

Already on January 23, Deputy Chief of the General Staff, Lieutenant General A.M. Vasilevsky informed Mekhlis that, in accordance with his request and at the direction of GKO member Malenkov, 450 light machine guns, 3,000 PPSH, 50 mortars of 120 mm and 82 mm caliber, were being issued to the front. Two battalions of M-8 rocket launchers were already on the way. Also promised were medium and KV tanks, anti-tank rifles and cartridges for them, other weapons and

technique.

In an effort to focus attention on Crimean affairs, the representative of the Stavka raised the question of reorganizing the front-line administration "in order to relieve the Military Council from worries about the Transcaucasus." This proposal was supported by the General Staff and a few days later it was implemented: on January 28, the Crimean Front gained independence.

As usual, Lev Zakharovich's cadres were the subject of special concern. From the commander of the Red Army Air Force, Lieutenant General of Aviation P.F. Zhigarev, on January 24, he achieved the appointment of a new commander of the front aviation - Major General of Aviation E.M. Nikolaenko. Somewhat later, at his own insistence, the following were appointed: Major General of the Engineering Troops A.F. Khrenov as Deputy Front Commander, Brigadier Commissar S.S. Yemelyanov - head of the political department. He obtained Malenkov's consent to the immediate dispatch of a 15,000-strong reinforcement of Russians or Ukrainians to the Crimean Front ("Reinforcement arrives here exclusively of Transcaucasian nationalities. Such a mixed national composition of divisions creates enormous difficulties," Mekhlis explained in Bodo). Obtained instructions to Major General Rumyantsev, head of the NPO's Main Personnel Department, to send generals and officers to the positions of chief

Headquarters of the 51st Army, commanders of the 236th and 63rd divisions, two chiefs of staff of divisions, five commanders of rifle regiments and 15 battalion commanders.

The representative did not limit himself to conversations with GKO member Malenkov and Deputy Chief of the General Staff Vasilevsky, but contacted directly those officials on whom the provision of the front directly depended. "Agreed to send fifteen thousand Russian reinforcements here," he telegraphed the same day to the head of the Main Directorate of Formation and Staffing, Shchadenko. "I ask you to send him at a special speed, to give reinforcements that are Russian and trained, because they will immediately go to work. Give a personal instruction to Kovalev (Head of the VOSO of the People's Commissariat of Defense. — A.R.) to follow the progress of the replenishment. I ask you to notify me by wire when and where the replenishment comes from. Chief of Artillery of the Red Army Colonel-General of Artillery N.N. Voronov Mekhlis urged to command 30 commanders of batteries of regimental and divisional artillery, 60 commanders of mortar companies, the chief of staff of artillery for the 44th Army, six chiefs of staff of artillery of the division, two chiefs of artillery supplies for the 44th and 51st armies. He ordered the head of the GUK to select four commanders of mortar batteries with combat experience for the 51st Army. In addition, he demanded the immediate transfer of the designated aviation commanders.

As the head of the Main Political Department, Mekhlis, naturally, paid special attention to the cadres of political workers. Judging by archival documents, he contacted his deputy in Moscow on this issue several times a week, especially at first, demanding a quick response to his requests. Already on January 24, Kuznetsov telegraphed him about sending, in accordance with the request, 300 political instructors from the VPU named after M.V. Frunze and 1000 political fighters from the PriVO. In the future, only until February 10, following the instructions of his chief, he sent to the Crimean Front two candidates for the positions of commissars of divisions, 5 commissars of regiments, 45 battalions, 23 military commissars of artillery divisions and batteries, 15 propaganda instructors, seven political workers of indigenous nationality to work in the Armenian, Georgian and Azerbaijani units, four who knew German, 688 political fighters. In anticipation of a new front offensive (began

February 27), at the request of Mekhlis, another 1030 political fighters and 225 deputy political officers were sent.

All the efforts of the Stavka representative were subordinated to the tasks of the forthcoming offensive. To make a decisive change in the events in the Crimea - this is precisely for this, as Lev Zakharovich realized, Stalin sent him here. In this vein, he acted. He had no doubts about his success: literally immediately upon arrival in the Crimea, he told Vasilevsky that "we will play great music for the Germans."

Even noting his considerable arrogance in assessing the capabilities of his own and the enemy, one cannot fail to notice that his actions at first were active and purposeful in their own way. A real increase in the combat effectiveness of the troops was achieved, command and political cadres,



whom the army commissar of the 1st rank did not give rest, as if shaken up, began to act more quickly, more dynamically. Another thing that does not deserve approval is the gross interference of the representative of the Headquarters in operational affairs, total control over the actions of the front command.

"By order of comrade. Mekhlis, all operational plans, directives and other orders to the troops of the front are checked and sanctioned by him," Kozlov informed Deputy Chief of the General Staff Vasilevsky. And, obviously disoriented by this turn of events, he asked: - Should in this case operational plans be submitted for approval to the People's Commissar, his proposals on the forthcoming activities of the troops or all instructions on all issues of life and activities of the troops should be received from him directly in place?"

Moscow, judging by the fact that Mekhlis felt himself to be a sovereign master on the Crimean front, did not object to this style of the Stavka representative. And he constantly put pressure on the front commander, striving for quick results. For example, already five days after his arrival, he achieved the issuance of an order along the front to conduct an offensive operation to liberate Feodosia.

Before starting it, the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command recommended replenishing with reserves, primarily tanks, regrouping troops, introducing the 47th Army into the junction of the 51st and 44th armies. By his directive from

I TsAMO, f. 16, op. 1025, d. 30, l. 35.

On January 28, she clarified: "The main task of the upcoming operation is to help the troops of the Sevastopol region, for which purpose the main blow of the front should be directed to Karasubazar and, by entering this region, create a threat to the enemy troops blocking Sevastopol."

On February 15, Mekhlis, together with General Vechny, was urgently summoned to Stalin to report on the degree of readiness of the troops for the offensive. The Supreme Commander was not satisfied with the report and allowed the offensive to be postponed. Lev Zakharovich, taking the opportunity, requested from the North Caucasus Military District the 271st, 276th and 320th rifle divisions to reinforce the front. It is characteristic that in a conversation with the commander of the troops of the North Caucasus Military District, General V.N. On February 16, Kurdyumov, he demanded that the divisions be cleared of "Caucasians" (Mekhlis's term. - Y.R.) and replace them with servicemen of the Russian nationality.

The offensive of the front troops began on February 27. Despite the advantage in manpower (13 of our divisions against 3 of the enemy), it was unsuccessful. The very next day, the enemy returned all of the little that the Soviet troops managed to capture the day before, primarily the main defense center - Koi-Asan.

These days, Konstantin Simonov, a war correspondent for Krasnaya Zvezda, was in the combat formations of units of the 51st Army. "The offensive began ... very unsuccessfully," he wrote. - In February, a blizzard came along with the rain, everything was incredibly unhappy, everything literally stood up, the tanks did not move, and the density of troops driven by Mekhlis, who led this offensive, replacing the de facto front commander of the weak-willed General Kozlov, was monstrous. Everything was pushed close to the front line, and every German shell, every mine, every bomb, exploding, inflicted enormous losses on us ... At a kilometer, two, three, five, seven kilometers from the front line, everything was in corpses ...

In a word, - the writer concludes with great bitterness, - it was a picture of mediocre military leadership and complete, monstrous disorder. Plus, there is a complete disregard for people, a complete lack of concern for preserving manpower, for saving people from unnecessary losses ... "

On March 2, in the face of a clear failure, the front command reported to the Headquarters about the decision to consolidate due to the impassability of the roads and launch the offensive again when the ground dries up. 5th of March

orders were received to resume the operation as soon as weather and road conditions permitted, without waiting for further instructions.

Believing that many troubles come from insufficient party-political work in the units, the representative of the Headquarters demanded replenishment from the GlavPU. In March, the Crimean Front received two military commissars of divisions, one military commissar of a tank brigade, nine military commissars of regiments, 500 political officers, 750 deputy political officers and 2,307 political fighters. And in the first week of April - another 400 deputy political officers and 2,000 political fighters. Kuznetsov's addition to the last telegram to Mekhlis is symptomatic: "There are no more political fighters."

Trying to make up for the huge losses in the past battles, the army commissar of the 1st rank ordered the command to take up the "pumping out of the rear". At the same time, his recommendations were not devoid of realism: "What is needed here is not an order, but practical work. It is also necessary to reduce the barrage battalion by 60-75 men, cut down all kinds of commands, commandant's... Take all the best from the rear, clamp down on the resisting rear bureaucrats so that they don't even squeak. dare..."

The fire was directed not only against the bureaucrats. Having received a message from the secretary of the city party committee of Novorossiysk, through which the main supply of the front went, about the strong infestation of the city with foreign nationals and an anti-Soviet element, on April 2, Mekhlis sent Stalin and Beria a code of particular importance. He asked to clean Novorossiysk from suspicious persons and turn it into a closed city. Withdraw from there, as well as from Kerch, the NKVD camps in which the servicemen who were in German captivity were kept: they had the opportunity to communicate with the soldiers who were going to the front. The understanding that this proposal met with the Supreme Commander-in-Chief was reflected in the Stalinist resolution: "Take Beria. Right! It is also necessary to clear Taman and Temryuk. In Novorossiysk, create such an environment that not a single bastard and not a single scoundrel could breathe there. Please let us know about the measures taken.

Our hero has previously been distinguished by rare energy and hard work. Feeling high support, he did not know peace himself at all and did not give it to others. Although, as Kuznetsov was informed in Moscow by Brigadier Commissar P.A. Fisunov, head of the secretariat of the Mekhlis, his boss could no longer boast of iron health, "he often gets sick."

APRF, f. 3, op. 50, d. 441. l. 66-68.

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"I work a lot," Lev Zakharovich wrote to his son. - I travel by all means of transport, including riding horses. The war is in full swing. Full of faith that we will defeat the German.

However, the measures taken could not radically change the situation. Resuming the offensive on March 13 by the forces of separate shock groups, the command of the Crimean Front tried for almost a month to break through the Koi-Asan knot of enemy defense, but achieved only minor tactical successes. Since April 11, attempts at offensive operations have ceased.

A vivid idea of the general causes of failures, in our opinion, is provided by the report of Mekhlis to the Supreme Commander-in-Chief on the results of the battle on March 20 in the zone of the 51st Army. Despite the optimistic assertion that "the battle ended in our favor", it was clear from the telegram, perhaps even against the will of its author, that there were no covert preparations for the offensive of the Soviet troops ("the enemy preempted our attack by 1—!/, hours" ), the rifle units were not distinguished by their training ("there is still a lot of work to be done on the infantry"), as a result, the 138th, 390th and 398th rifle divisions and the 12th rifle brigade suffered heavy losses. In addition, Mekhlis asked Stalin for immediate intervention in connection with the extreme need for ammunition, as well as the need to reinforce the front with a regiment of combat installations of the RS (rocket artillery combat vehicles - "Katyusha"), a regiment of USV (76-mm cannons of the 1939 model g.) and T-34 tanks.

During the two months of his stay on the Crimean Front, he, as a representative of the Headquarters, did not manage to introduce the necessary change in the course of events. He relied more and more on the quantitative factor, on the enthusiasm of the people. Careful preparation of the offensive (training of headquarters and troops, material and combat support, reconnaissance, etc.) was underestimated, replacing it with pressure, bare orders, and a massive shuffling of command and political personnel. What would be obvious and significant for a competent military commander, seemed to the head of the GlavPU to be secondary. The harm from his stay on the Crimean front clearly outweighed the benefits.

Marshal of the Soviet Union N.I. Krylov, who in the days of the described events was the chief of staff of the Primorsky Army, which defended Sevastopol, recalled that the command of the Crimean Front behaved in an incomprehensible way, as if the two formations were solving different problems. Sevastopol was separated from the Ak-Monai positions

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tsii some 160-170 kilometers, but the headquarters of the front could not be contacted either by telephone or by direct telegraph wire. The front headquarters had no representatives in Sevastopol. But there was no shortage of optimistic forecasts. Seeing off in March 1942 the newly appointed member of the Military Council of the Primorsky Army, Divisional Commissar I.F. Chukhnov to Sevastopol, Mekhlis promised to meet him together on May 1 in Simferopol.

“In parting words to a new member of the military council of our army,” writes Krylov, “L.Z. Mekhlis and front commander D.T. Kozlov confirmed the former tasks of the Primorye: staunchly defend Sevastopol, pin down enemy forces, preventing them from being taken to Kerch, and at the same time be ready for the offensive. If the enemy starts to retreat, pursue him. For some reason, they were worried that we would not miss this moment ... The front commander gave an oral instruction: to keep a division, or better two, in reserve for future offensive operations.

The task was set for others, but they themselves were not properly prepared for its implementation. But the enemy was not going to sit on the defensive. It is no coincidence that the 6th German Corps, operating on the Crimean Peninsula, was headed by one of the talented strategists of Nazi Germany, Colonel-General E. Manstein. But dizziness from a successful counter-offensive near Moscow prevented the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command and the Supreme Command from correctly assessing the situation. Against the objections of the General Staff and Zhukov, Stalin decided on a strategic offensive by the Red Army in the spring and summer of 1942 along the entire length of the Soviet-German front. At the same time, the Crimean direction was recognized as one of the most important, but it was not really prepared for the offensive. The Headquarters relied more and more on the reports of its representative, and the reader was already convinced of the level of competence of Mekhlis the strategist.

#### WHAT THE PERSONNEL POLICY TURNED OUT

Himself not knowing how to fight in a modern way, he was looking for the notorious “mote” in the “eye” of the leading staff of the front, first of all, the commander. Taking the opportunity of a direct report by the Supreme

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Krylov N.I. Will never fade. Ed. 2. M., 1984. S. 449.

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to the commander-in-chief, the representative of the Headquarters repeatedly tried to convince him of the need to replace Kozlov.

From the telegram of Mekhlis and Vechny addressed to Stalin dated March 9, 1942: “... Due to the fact that Commander Kozlov himself is a man of low military and general culture, he does not like to burden himself with work, the documents emanating from the command are editorially sloppy, vague and sometimes distort the meaning. In order to avoid trouble, they often have to be detained for correction ... ”Probably, the representative of the Headquarters came to the conclusion that

confront, although it is convenient for its suppleness, it is very ordinary. There is no victory next to him see.

On March 29, a new report went to Moscow with a request to replace Kozlov. Lev Zakharovich summed up the conclusions about him: lazy, unintelligent, "a gluttonous gentleman from the peasants." He does not like painstaking, everyday work, he is not interested in operational issues, trips to the troops are "punishment" for him. He is unknown in the troops of the front, does not enjoy authority. Also, "dangerously lying." While painting the front commander in a negative light, the Moscow emissary at the same time could not resist complimenting himself: "If the front-line machine works in the end in any way satisfactorily, this is due to the fact that the front has a strong military council, a new chief of staff (meaning General Vechny appointed by that time. — Yu.R.), and I am not an American observer here, but in accordance with your instructions I am interfering in affairs. It seems to me that this position should not be left any longer, and Kozlova must be removed."

The subsequent tragic outcome of the Kerch defensive operation, in which the front commander is largely to blame, would seem to do credit to the foresight of the Headquarters representative. But one cannot discount the fact that many of Kozlov's mistakes and miscalculations are the result of harsh pressure and unskilled interference on the part of Mekhlis. So another question is which of them should have been recalled for the good of the case.

Lieutenant General Kozlov had his pluses and minuses. He did not participate in the defensive campaign of 1941, being up to

'TsAMO, f. 32, op. 11309. d. 139, l. 103. 2 TsAMO, Ff. 32, op. 11309, d. 139, l. 174.

until December, the commander of the Transcaucasian military district, and then the front, which covered the state border with Iran, therefore, had a rough idea of the Wehrmacht. But, on the other hand, he had the leadership of the successful landing of a large landing during the Kerch-Feodosiya landing operation. Therefore, Stalin believed that Kozlov would be able to cope with the matter, and at the suggestion of Mekhlis to replace the commander of the generals N.K. Klykov or K.K. Rokossovsky did not answer with consent.

Lev Zakharovich achieved more in relation to other leading persons. He sent a cipher to the Headquarters with a proposal to remove Major General F.I. Tolbukhin. On March 10, 1942, General Vasilevsky informed him that Stalin supported this proposal and entrusted the performance of the duties of the NS Front to General Vechny. Mekhlis opposed the proposal of the Military Council of the Front to leave Tolbukhin on the Crimean Front in the position of Assistant Front Commander for Staffing and Formation or Deputy Commander of the 47th Army. He turned to the Chief of the General Staff, Marshal Shaposhnikov, with a request to make sure "that Tolbukhin does not get a job at the ZakVO again, because there are again rotten and useless workers who are being removed from work here."

At the initiative of the representative of the Headquarters, the composition of the military councils of the Crimean Front and all three armies included in it was completely changed. By decrees of the State Defense Committee of February 11 and 13, 1942, V.S. Bulatov and regimental commissar Ya.S. Kolesov.

Doubtful, from the point of view of the final result, the shuffling of personnel also affected the commanders of the armies. Only Commander-5 I, Lieutenant General V.N., escaped it. Lvov, whose undoubted merits could not but be appreciated even by the very suspicious Mekhlis. He even mentioned Lvov in a telegram to Stalin among those who could replace Kozlov.

But on the commander of the 47th Army, Major General K.F. Baronov was especially suspicious. A representative of the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command connected a special department of the NKVD of the front to his "development", from where he soon received compromising evidence on Baronov. General - member of the CPSU (b) since 1918, in 1934 "for the White Guard manners" (? - Yu.R.)

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was excluded during cleaning, then, however, restored. Relatives are suspicious: brother Mikhail is a participant in the Kronstadt rebellion, a "Wrangelite", lives in Paris. Another brother, Sergei, was convicted in 1937 for participating in a counterrevolutionary organization. Wife - "daughter of the huntsman of the royal hunt." Baronov himself was exposed in connection with persons "suspicious of espionage". He drinks heavily. Almost no head of staff. He often leaves for units and does not keep in touch with the headquarters.

The general's fate was sealed. In February 1942, he was transferred to the Transcaucasian Front as deputy army commander, where he died the following year. Major General K.S. took command of the 47th Army. Kolganov.

In the 44th Army, after being seriously wounded, Commander Major General A.P. Pervushin, his duties were performed by the chief of staff, Colonel S.E. Christmas. Mekhlis sharply objected to his confirmation in this position, and Lieutenant General S.I. became commander of the 44th army. Chernyak. The true assessment of both by the representative of the Stavka is evidenced by the entry made by him, however, after the evacuation from the Crimea: "Chernyak. An illiterate person, incapable of leading an army. His chief of staff, Rozhdestvensky, is a boy, not an organizer of troops. One can wonder whose hand introduced Chernyak to the rank of lieutenant general.

A lot of facts show that the war that has been going on for almost a year has not taught Lev Zakharovich to trust people. Quite the contrary: the failures of the first months clearly exacerbated his traditional suspicion. With the same ardor with which, in his time, as a student at the Institute of Red Professors, he exposed the hidden Trotskyists, and as the editor of Pravda, he smashed the "right deviation," the Stavka representative identified and uprooted now the "foreign elements," the guilty ones, according to in his opinion, in the failures of the Crimean Front. He planted the atmosphere of real detective work, swindle and covert surveillance, as evidenced by the following document - a special message from the head of the special department of the NKVD of the 44th army, senior battalion commissar Kovalev, dated April 20, 1942:

"According to your order, I studied the mood of the commander of the 44th Army, Lieutenant General Chernyak, and a member of the military council of the 44th Army, Brigadier Commissar Serdyukov, in connection with the meeting of the Military Council of the Crimean Front

April 18 this year After the meeting, returning to his dugout, Chernyak, in a conversation with the chief of staff Rozhdestvensky, expressing his dissatisfaction, said: If it's not okay, teach, but why do it at a meeting." And further: "At least go to command a company. I fell asleep, but nothing, they will recall me to Moscow "...

On the second day, in the afternoon, in a conversation with Major General Naneishvili, Chernyak complained about the captious attitude towards him on the part of Comrades. Mekhlis and Kozlov ... "

It is clear from the text of the special report that the conversations of other officials were also eavesdropped, including a member of the Military Council of the Army and the head of the political department. Surveillance was total. As a result, the head of the political department of the front, brigade commissar P.M., fell under the hot hand of the Stavka representative and was replaced. Solomko, head of the personnel department of the front, lieutenant colonel I.A. Loktionov and a number of other officials.

Notebooks have been preserved in which Lev Zakharovich entered his assessments of commanders and political workers. They are interesting, first of all, because they give an idea of the qualities that first of all attracted the attention of the Stalinist emissary in people. It is also striking that there is not a single positive assessment. Here are a few entries (underlining and Mekhlis abbreviations):

224th Infantry Division: "Intendent [dant] of the 2nd rank Dombrovsky is a poor worker, a Pole. Non-partisan [th]." In all three regiments, "headquarters are bad." .

160th Infantry Regiment: Khramtsov. Does not correspond to the purpose |, there is no will, no initiative. Confused. Commissioner [sar] Kushchev A.A. — absolutely unsuitable. We have to take it off."

143rd Rifle Brigade: "Colonel [ovnik] Kurashvili. Weak, weak-willed, undemanding. Can be used] in staff positions."

320th Infantry Division: "Replace the Commissar. The commanders are panicking. Runners. Need to be replaced part of the staff."

224th Rifle Division: "Start at the division headquarters—Sakharulidze. Weak... Deputy commander] of the division - Kantari! He was expelled twice for hiding and serving in the Menshevik army.

I TsAMO, f. 32, op. 11309, d. 139, l. 502-504.

Undoubtedly, the representative of the Headquarters exacted justly from some commanders and political workers, correctly noting their professional unsuitability, lack of necessary strong-willed qualities. But, as we have already seen, often he simply could not or did not want to see undoubted merits, as was the case, say, with the brilliant commander Fyodor Ivanovich Tolbukhin, who became the Marshal of the Soviet Union just two years later. Everything rested on the fact that Mekhlis, instead of patient education of personnel, a combination of trust and demand for the task assigned, resorted, in fact, to the only lever in personnel work - replacement, and even reprisal against those who caused him discontent. It is unlikely that in such an environment the commanders and political workers acted more confidently and more reliably, which, in theory, Lev Zakharovich sought. As a result, the difficulties at the front only worsened.

The head of GlavPU not only actively "cleaned" the cadres. And at the same time he fought ... with prisoners. And, not jokingly, I considered it for valor. Otherwise, he probably would not have written about this to his son (although justifying himself with considerations of revenge): "In the city of Kerch, up to 7 thousand corpses of the civilian population (including children), all were shot by monsters by the Nazis (during the occupation in 1941 - Yu.R.). The blood runs cold with anger and a thirst for revenge. Nazi prisoners I order to finish. And Fisunov (head of the secretariat, he is the adjutant of Mekhlis. - Yu.R.) works well here. He destroys the robbers with particular satisfaction. It seems that this is a very important touch to the true moral character of the Stalinist emissary.

In April 1942, Commissar of the Navy Admiral N.G. Kuznetsov. Here is what he writes in his memoirs "On the Eve": "And here we are at the headquarters of the front. There was confusion. Commander of the Crimean Front D.T. Kozlov was already "in the pocket" of Mekhlis, who interfered literally in all operational affairs. Chief of Staff P.P. The Eternal did not know whose orders to carry out - the commander or Mehliis. Marshal S.M. Budyonny (commander-in-chief of the North Caucasian direction, under whose subordination was the Crimean Front. - Yu.R.) also could not do anything. Mehliis did not want to obey him, referring to the fact that

'RGVA, f. 40884, op. 1, d. 71, l. 9.

receives instructions directly from Headquarters. How all this resembles the activities of Mehliis during the war with Finland!

It was not difficult for Lev Zakharovich to groundlessly accuse a person of cowardice, which was noticed by Major General Khrenov, who had just arrived in the Crimea for the post of deputy front commander. In our opinion, the writer Konstantin Simonov found the exact words to characterize this side of his personality: "He was a man who, in that period of the war, without entering into any circumstances, considered everyone who preferred a convenient position a hundred meters from the enemy to an uncomfortable one fifty - a coward. He considered everyone who simply wanted to protect the troops from possible failure as an alarmist; He considered everyone who realistically assessed the strength of the enemy to be unsure of his own strength. Mehliis, for all his

personal readiness to give one's life for the motherland was a pronounced product of the atmosphere of 1937-1938.

"... AND SHOULD BE DAMNED"

Ultimately, this style of working with people turned into huge losses when decisive and, to our deep regret, tragic events for the Soviet troops unfolded on the Crimean Front. In the historical literature, they are defined as the Kerch defensive operation on May 8–21, 1942.

The foundations for future failure were laid ahead of time, although with the onset of spring warmth, it seemed that not only nature was reborn, but also the hope of the Crimean defenders for a turn of events at the front. Lev Zakharovich himself expressed these sentiments in personal correspondence: "There is a stubborn struggle going on. The enemy protects every hill. He's still hoping for spring, and we're trying to disappoint him."

But it soon became clear that there were no grounds for optimism. In April, the situation of the Soviet troops became more complicated. Local resources - food, energy and others - were exhausted. It was not possible to compensate for the losses incurred during the February-April battles, which amounted to more than 225 thousand people. Nevertheless, the balance of forces and means was in favor of our

1 Kuznetsov N.G. The day before. S. 268.

troops. The enemy was inferior: in manpower - 2 times, in tanks - 1.2 times, in artillery - 1.8 times. The Germans, however, had a larger number of aircraft - 1.7 times.

What tasks were set by the Supreme High Command in this period for the front? The multi-volume History of the Great Patriotic War of 1941–1945 states that "after several unsuccessful attempts to launch a decisive offensive, the troops of the Crimean Front, at the direction of the Headquarters, ceased active operations and went on the defensive." If so. Just two weeks before the German offensive, on April 21, the Supreme Commander confirmed the task of continuing operations to clear the peninsula of the enemy. And only on May 6, that is, a day before the enemy offensive, Stalin ordered the troops of the Crimean Front "to firmly gain a foothold on the occupied lines, improving their defensive structures in engineering terms and improving the tactical position of the troops in certain sectors, in particular, by capturing Koi-Asana Knot.

A contradictory and very dangerous situation developed, when the grouping of troops of the front remained offensive, but the offensive was delayed, and the defense was not strengthened. All three armies were deployed in one echelon, which reduced the depth of defense and sharply limited the ability to repel enemy attacks in the event of a breakthrough. The most unsuccessful was the formation of the troops of the 44th army of General Chernyak, on which the main enemy blow fell. Suffice it to say that the second echelon of the army was located at a depth of only 3-4 km from the front line, and this gave the enemy the opportunity to break through not only tactical, but also operational defenses even without changing the positions of their artillery.

Air support was obviously insufficient. Of the 17 aviation regiments that were part of the Air Force of the front, only 8 were based on the airfields of the Kerch Peninsula. The rear defensive lines of the front - the Turkish Wall and the Kerch contours - existed only on operational maps.

There is no reason to accuse Mekhlis of categorically denying the need for defense in general. He was well aware of the importance of defensive formations in depth, at least from the battles on the Kakhovka bridgehead in 1920 on the Southern Front. The same was taught by the fresh experience of his participation in the organization of the defense of Moscow.

on the Reserve and Western fronts, in the creation of defensive lines on the North-Western and Volkhov fronts. That is, we repeat, he was not an opponent of defense at all. But in

In the specific situation of April - early May 1942, the representative of the Headquarters believed in the inability of the Germans to attack. "Do not take the enemy's false maneuvers for truth", "you need to look ahead, prepare columns and bridges, work out actions to unblock" - Mekhlis stood in such positions, according to the memoirs of General Khrenov. By smashing the "defensive psychology of some generals," he thus had a negative influence on the command of the front.

"All talk about the possibility of a successful German offensive and our forced withdrawal L.3. Mehlis considered harmful, and precautionary measures unnecessary," recalled Admiral Kuznetsov, who visited on April 28, together with Marshal Budyonny, the command post of the Crimean Front in the village of Leninskoye. Being confident in the "blindness" of the Germans, Lev Zakharovich rejected the most modest assumptions that they knew where the headquarters of the front was located. Such arrogance came at a cost.

Disregarding the laws of modern warfare, which dictated a persistent strengthening of the defense in the conditions that had developed in the Crimea, Lev Zakharovich turned to the usual lever - he increased the political apparatus. At his request, literally on the eve of the German offensive, 199 political workers were sent from Moscow. On May 10, an additional 600 people left for the front, and a few days later another 201.

Meanwhile, events took on more and more menacing outlines. On May 6, on the day of receiving Stalin's order on the transition of the front troops to the defense, from the chief of staff of the North Caucasus direction, Major General G.F. Zakharov received information of extreme importance. A Croatian pilot who flew over the front line warned that the Germans were preparing to attack. The information was confirmed by other sources. On the night of May 7, the military council of the Crimean Front sent the necessary orders to the troops, but this was done so slowly that by the morning they did not even reach all the army commanders. The certainty that it was not the Germans, but we, "would give them a big blow," clearly played its disastrous role.

music."

On the morning of May 7, an avalanche of bombers and attack aircraft hit the headquarters, nodes and communication lines of the Soviet troops. The communication of the front command post with the command post of all three armies was broken. And with the dawn of the next day, artillery and aviation preparation of the Germans began. At 5 o'clock. 30 min. their ground troops, with the complete dominance of aviation, went on the offensive against the 44th Army on the left flank of the front. By the end of the day, both lines of defense of the army in a section of 5 km along the front and up to 10 km in depth were broken through.

Reporting this to the Supreme Commander-in-Chief, Mekhlis complained about the dominance of enemy aircraft, an acute shortage of shells and mines, and asked to transfer a rifle brigade from the Taman Peninsula to take up defense on the Kerch bypass. That's when all the perniciousness of neglecting the measures of defense began to reach his consciousness! The representative of the Headquarters could not but be aware that events were developing in a completely different way than he had expected. He tried to shift all the blame for this onto Kozlov.

From a telegram from Mekhlis to Stalin dated May 8, 1942: "Now is not the time to complain, but I must report so that the Headquarters knows the front commander. On May 7, that is, on the eve of the enemy offensive, Kozlov convened a military council to discuss a project for a future operation to capture Koi-Asan. I recommended that this project be postponed and instructions given to the armies immediately in connection with the expected advance of the enemy. In the signed order, the commander in several places indicated that the offensive was expected on May 10-15, and proposed to work until May 10 and study the army defense plan with all command personnel, commanders of formations and headquarters. This was done when the whole situation of the past day showed that the enemy would advance in the morning. At my insistence, the erroneous orientation in terms was corrected. Kozlov also resisted the advancement of additional forces to the sector of the 44th Army.



The telegram, however, was not successful. The Supreme Commander was so annoyed by the failure that in his response telegram he did not consider it necessary to contain his anger. And after the Soviet command failed to eliminate the German breakthrough on May 9 and its depth increased to 30 km, and in the zone not only of the 44th, but also of the 51st Army, a representative of the Headquarters was called to a direct wire.

Negotiations between the command of the Crimean Front and the Supreme Commander-in-Chief took place on May 10 at 02:55. Mekhlis, Kozlov and Kolesov reported that they were withdrawing the left flank behind the Akmonai positions. They hope to detain the enemy with the forces of the 12th and 143rd rifle brigades and the 72nd cavalry division, the 156th rifle division is put on the defensive on the Turkish Wall. They also asked for the 103rd Rifle Brigade to be sent from Taman, as well as permission to move the front command post in connection with the continuous bombing in the quarries on the northern outskirts of Kerch.

The answer was: "1) The entire 47th Army must immediately begin to withdraw behind the Turkish Wall, organizing a rearguard and covering the retreat with aircraft. Without this, there will be a risk of being captured. 2) We cannot give the 103rd brigade. 3) You can organize a strike with the forces of the 51st Army in order to gradually withdraw this army behind the Turkish Wall. 4) The remnants of the 44th army must also be withdrawn behind the Turkish Wall. 5) Mehliis and Kozlov should immediately start organizing defense along the Turkish Wall line. 6) We do not object to the transfer of the headquarters to the place indicated by you. 7) We strongly object to the departure of Kozlov and Mekhlis to Lvov's group. 8) Take all measures so that all artillery, especially large ones, is concentrated behind the Turkish Wall, as well as a number of anti-tank regiments. 9) If you manage and have time to detain the enemy in front of the Turkish Wall, we will consider this an achievement ..."

So, having finally understood that neither Mehliis nor Kozlov would invent gunpowder, the Supreme Commander sets them the maximum task: to withdraw their troops and detain enemy units at the turn of the Turkish Wall. Let us recall that in Moscow, perhaps, they did not know: both the shaft itself and the Kerch contours were actually not equipped in engineering terms and did not represent a serious obstacle for the enemy.

The sluggishness and confusion of the front command and the representative of the Headquarters served the enemy as additional help. Generals Kolganov and Lvov received the order to withdraw the armies from the front headquarters only towards the end of May 10, and they began to carry it out another day later. Meanwhile, by the end of the 10th, the advanced units of the Germans reached the Turkish Wall. They had a little more than 30 km to Kerch, while units of the 47th Army - two and a half times more.

TsAMO, f. 32, op. 11309, d. 140, l. 341-345.

Seeing that the command of the front and the representative of the Headquarters had finally lost the threads of control and the position of our troops was becoming more and more threatening, the Headquarters of the All-Russian Supreme Command on May 11 at 23:50 ordered the Bodo Commander-in-Chief of the North Caucasus Direction, Marshal Budyonny, "to urgently leave to the area of the headquarters of the Crimean Front (Kerch), to restore order in the Military Council of the front, to force Mehliis and Kozlov to stop their work on formation in the rear, transferring this matter to the rear workers, to force them to leave immediately for the Turkish Wall, to receive the retreating troops and material part, put them in order and organize a stable defense on the line of the Turkish Wall, breaking the defensive line into sections led by responsible commanders. The main task is not to let the enemy through to the east of the Turkish Wall, using all defensive means, military units, aviation and navy means for this.

Budyonny followed this instruction only after a day and a half: at the front command post, he, together with a member of the Military Council of the SKN, Admiral I.S. Isakov arrived at noon on May 13. The instructions he gave concerned mainly the evacuation of heavy artillery and Katyushas to the Taman Peninsula and measures to restore the situation on the left flank of the 44th Army. They could not make cardinal changes in the situation, with which the marshal departed back to Krasnodar.

Budyonny did not have a chance to personally communicate with the leadership of the front: on May 12, Kozlov and Mekhlis, finally heeding the order of the Stavka, went to the Turkish Wall in the Sultanovka area, where units

44th Army of General Chernyak. The representative of the Stavka later reported to Stalin how the headquarters of the 44th Army and representatives of the headquarters of the front stopped scattered units and individual soldiers retreating in disorder. A very similar picture appeared before Mekhlis and to the north, in the area of the railway: "Parts of the 47th army randomly retreat under the most severe influence of aviation. The departure was unorganized. No parts were found. There were disparate groups."

'Russian archive: Great Patriotic. Supreme Command Headquarters: Documents and Materials. 1942 T. 16 (5-2). M., 1996. S. 201. 2 TsAMO, f. 32, op. 11309, d. 140, l. 102.

Despite the complexity, even the catastrophic situation, the withdrawal of our troops did not at all represent a general stampede. The personnel of the 72nd Cavalry Division (commanded by Major General V.I. Kniga) showed genuine courage and fortitude. During the whole day, the cavalymen, together with the 12th and 143rd rifle brigades that approached from the front reserve, did not let the enemy through in a strip of more than 10 km. Covering the retreat of other units, the soldiers of the 77th Mountain Rifle Division, Colonel P.Ya. Tsindzenevsky (who in January, we recall, was almost shot under the hot hand of Mekhlis), and the 55th tank brigade (commander - Colonel P.P. Lebedenko). However, not everyone fought like this, the Armenian and Azerbaijani divisions proved to be very unstable.

The lack of normal communication, the loss of command and control of the troops, disorder, and even panic were exacerbated by the actions of the Stavka representative and other leaders. Here is what Admiral Kuznetsov wrote about this: "...During the battle, Mekhlis rushed around on a gas truck under fire, trying to stop the retreating troops, but it was all in vain. At such a moment, it is not the personal courage of an individual commander that is of decisive importance, but a pre-worked out military organization, firm order and discipline.

And, sadly, they weren't. Only on May 13, that is, almost three days after the order of the Headquarters, "the main remaining units and formations," as Mekhlis reported to Stalin, "concentrated on the line of the Turkish Wall and began to take up defense." The enemy did not wait, but imposed his development of events. With tanks and infantry, with active air support, he struck at the Sultanovka-Novo-Nikolaevka front. By the end of the day, the Turkish Wall was broken through. The next day, the situation of our troops worsened even more.

From the report of Mekhlis to Stalin: "For 14.5, the fighting on the entire front of the Kerch bypass continued with unrelenting force. The enemy, with tanks and infantry, continued to strike at our center in the direction of Andreevka-Kerch and on the left flank of Churbash-Kerch, at the same time inflicting continuous powerful bombing strikes on our troops, accumulations of convoys and destroying everything

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Kuznetsov N.G. The day before. pp. 268-269.

piers and moorings in the port of Kamysh-Burun, Kerch, the Voikov plant and at the crossings in Yenikal, Opasnaya and Zhukovka. The units suffered heavy losses, especially in the materiel... The convoys and rear of the three armies, gathered in the narrow space of the eastern part of the Kerch Peninsula, were destroyed by aircraft. The armies by this time (morning of May 15. - Yu.R.) included only separate organized units and formations.

Seeing that the command of the Crimean Front had finally lost the threads of control, the Headquarters issued orders that, unfortunately, were only capable of easing the agony. But they were also contradictory. So, at dawn on May 14, Stalin received an order from Moscow to begin the withdrawal of troops to the Taman Peninsula. By the evening (at 18:10), the Supreme Commander-in-Chief was informed of Mekhlis's response telegram: "Fights are going on on the outskirts of Kerch, from the north the city is being bypassed by the enemy. We are straining our last efforts to detain [him] to the west of Bulganak. Parts spontaneously depart. The evacuation of equipment and people will be insignificant. The command post is moving [to] Yenikale. We have dishonored the country and must be damned. We will fight to the last. Enemy aviation decided the outcome of the battle!

Obviously, the panicked tone of the telegram forced Stalin to make a decision that actually canceled the previous order to start the evacuation. On May 15, at 1:10 a.m., he telegraphed to Lieutenant General Kozlov: "The Headquarters of the Supreme High Command under says:

1. Don't surrender Kerch, organize defense like Sevastopol.
2. To transfer to the troops fighting in the west a group of courageous commanders with walkie-talkies with the task of taking the troops in hand, organizing a strike group in order to eliminate the enemy who had broken through to Kerch and restore the defense along one of the Kerch bypasses. If the situation allows, you need to be there in person.
3. You command the front, not Mehlis. Mehlis should help you. If that doesn't work, please let me know..."

For the first time, the Supreme Commander-in-Chief publicly expressed doubts about the benefits of the presence of the army commissar of the 1st rank on

TsAMO, f. 32, op. 11309, d. 140, l. 77.

Crimean Front, in its ability to ensure the fulfillment of the assigned task. It is a pity that this did not change the tragic situation.

Kerch fell on May 15. On that day, an entry appeared in the diary of the Chief of the General Staff of the Wehrmacht Ground Forces F. Halder: "The Kerch operation can be considered completed. The city and the port are in our hands." The German general was in a hurry. The resistance of our troops was by no means broken. The same Halder on May 17 and 18 was forced to note in his diary "fierce resistance northeast of Kerch." Nevertheless, the Crimean Front was doomed.

How did the representative of the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command behave in these dramatic days and hours? What did he feel when he saw what a catastrophe his stay here ends with? Did you feel any guilt behind yourself?

"I saw Mekhlis when we were ordered to evacuate what could still be evacuated from the Kerch Peninsula," Admiral Isakov told Konstantin Simonov. "He pretended to be looking for death. His forehead was either broken or slightly wounded, but there was no bandage, there was a bloody scratch with bruises; he was unshaven for several days. His hands and feet were covered in mud, he apparently helped the driver to pull out the car and after that did not consider it necessary to put himself in order. The sight was desperate. He also had a car that had a completely desperate look, and he drove alone with a driver, without any guards. Despite the tragedy of the situation, there was something ostentatious in this - a person shows that he is looking for death.

To Simonov's remark that, according to his observations, Mekhlis is not a timid man, Isakov replied: "He was there, near Kerch, climbing all the time forward, forward. I also know that he was in battle on the Finnish front, went on the attack in the ranks of the battalion. But ... in my opinion, he is not brave, he is nervous, overwrought, fanatical.

Fate kept Lev Zakharovich. On May 14, while at the command post of the 44th Army, together with his escorts, he came under artillery fire. The head of the political department of the army, as well as the guarantor Mekhlis, were seriously wounded, cars were smashed, but the representative of the Stavka did not have a scratch. We must give him his due: in such situations, he did not lose his presence of mind.

Courage was lacking in something else - in recognizing his own military-professional failure, as well as the viciousness of the methods that he used in working with people. Even in these last, most dramatic days for the Crimean Front, the representative of the Stavka was not

is able to renounce the suspicion cultivated for decades, the ability to see someone's intrigues, provocations, conspiracies everywhere and everywhere.

At 10 pm on May 14, he reported to Stalin, the head of the special department of the front, Commissar of State Security of the 3rd rank A.M. Belyakov informed the Military Council, which was at the command post in the Adzhimushkaysky quarries, that he had been instructed by the Supreme Command Headquarters to immediately evacuate the members of the council to the Taman Peninsula. When the leaders arrived at the place indicated by Belyakov - at the pier of the plant. Voikov, "an interrogation of Rear Admiral Frolov (commander of the Kerch naval base, senior naval commander in Kerch. - Yu.R.) revealed a misunderstanding, according to Mekhlis, very similar to a provocation." It turned out that the Military Council actually relocated not to Taman, the opposite shore of the Kerch Strait, but to Yenikal. Misinformation led to the fact that the transfer of the front headquarters was carried out in a hurry, disorganized, as a result, the already weak command and control of troops was disrupted for at least eight hours.

Frolov, trying once again to shift the blame for the failures to others, Lev Zakharovich will still remember. Let's open the book of Admiral Kuznetsov's memoirs again: "When the situation in Kerch became catastrophic, Mekhlis tried to shift the responsibility for what had happened to the commander of the Kerch base A.S. Frolov (appointed as the head of the crossing to the Taman Peninsula. - Yu.R.). He called me and demanded that I put Frolov on trial, otherwise he would be shot. by his order.

"You don't dare to do that," I replied!

Of course, Frolov bears some responsibility for the significant shortcomings of the evacuation, which began on the night of May 15 and lasted five days. But is he alone? By Mekhlis's own admission, until May 16, the headquarters of the front had no evacuation plan. Let us add from ourselves that, as subsequent events showed, planned,

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Kuznetsov N.G. The day before. S. 269.

there was no organizing principle, including from the side of the representative of the Headquarters, in the future. A number of senior officials hurried to move to the opposite shore of the Kerch Strait: on May 13, the deputy commander of the front troops, Colonel General Ya.T. Cherevichenko, on the night of the 15th - assistant commander General Krupnikov, on the 17th - member of the Military Council Shamanin. The shell-shocked Kolesov, the second member of the Military Council, was evacuated on the 16th. On May 17, the command post of the front moved to the Taman Peninsula in the village. Cordon Ilyich.

Watercraft were supplied irregularly and out of time. The commanders of many civilian ships refused to approach the coast under bombardment and artillery fire, and simulated accidents. With the potential to transport 30-35 thousand people per day, only on May 17 they were able to evacuate a little more than 22 thousand, on other days there was not even that. The established order: the wounded, the materiel of heavy artillery, RSs was not respected. Under the guise of the wounded, crowds of unarmed, demoralized fighters seized ships by force and crossed to the Chushka Spit.

Later, in a collective letter to the Supreme Commander-in-Chief, a group of political workers of the 51st, 47th and 44th armies painted tragic pictures: the absence of at least some organizing principle during the withdrawal, which quickly turned into a stampede, a terrible crush at the crossings, mass casualties. "All this happened thanks to the treacherous command of the Crimean Front, otherwise it cannot be considered," the authors of the letter, driven to extremes, declared.

Mekhlis himself was on the bridgehead until the evening of May 19 and crossed with the last units of the 51st Army, thus becoming one of those about 140 thousand people who nevertheless managed to be evacuated to the Taman Peninsula. Crimea was left behind, completely (with the exception of Sevastopol) passed into the hands of the enemy, and huge losses - more than 176 thousand people, more than 3.5

thousand guns and mortars, 400 aircraft, 347 tanks. In total, during the 111 days of the existence of the Crimean Front, irretrievable losses reached about 450 thousand people?

TsAMO, f. 32, op. 11309, d. 116, l. 223-224. 2 Great Patriotic War 1941-1945. Military historical outline

ki. Book. 1. M., 1998. S. 332.

What, according to Mehlis, led to such a defeat? This is answered by the documents that came out from under his pen - a report to Stalin and draft notes to the report. Here (especially in the text of the report) it was dangerous to be cunning, knowing how painfully the leader reacted to the tragedy in the Crimea. This circumstance makes these documents, in our opinion, the most objective evidence of the true ideas of Mekhlis.

"There were enough forces to hold the Kerch Peninsula," he admits. "We didn't make it." "It is not the fighters who are to blame, but the leadership for the outcome of operation 8-20.U." Analyzing the reasons for the unsuccessful withdrawal of our units, he refers to the experience of the past: "The most serious part of military art is to be able to withdraw troops. All the genius of Kutuzov is in this "(emphasis added by Mekhlis. - H.R.).

And here is a characteristic confession, which in a different situation an army commissar of the 1st rank probably would not have dared: "400 s.d. K 11U. there was nothing but rifles. 12 sb. (rifle brigade. — Y.R.)". "The speed of the tanks is bad. They crawl like turtles." "Military intelligence does not work well." "398 s.d. There were no battle formations, they are marching in herds.

In this series of impartial assessments are the fragments of the report to Stalin quoted above about the stampede of many demoralized units, the instability of the Armenian and Azerbaijani divisions, the overwhelming superiority of German aviation, and the disorderly evacuation. Finally, a confession: "There is no exact data on how many ... fighters remained on the Kerch Peninsula."

One should give credit to Mekhlis: he does not make any attempts to justify himself, to somehow anticipate the assessment of the Supreme Commander-in-Chief of his activities. Moreover, in general, he was already aware of it from a telegram received from Moscow on May 8 in response to a report on the German offensive that had begun and contained another proposal to change the commander of the front, Kozlov. Then the Supreme Commander telegraphed: "You hold on to the strange position of an outside observer who is not responsible for the affairs of the Crimean Front. This position is very convenient, but it is rotten through and through. On the Crimean front, you are not an outside observer, but

I TsAMO, f. 32, op. 11309, d. 140, l. 249, 261, 267, 272, 275.

a responsible representative of the Headquarters, responsible for all the successes and failures of the front and obliged to correct the errors of the command on the spot. You, together with the command, are responsible for the fact that the left flank of the front turned out to be extremely weak. If "the whole situation showed that the enemy would advance in the morning," and you did not take all measures to organize a rebuff, limiting yourself to passive criticism, then so much the worse for you. So, you have not yet understood that you were sent to the Crimean Front not as a State Control, but as a responsible representative of the Headquarters.

You demand that we replace Kozlov with someone like Hindenburg. But you cannot fail to know that we do not have Hindenburgs in reserve. Your affairs in the Crimea are not difficult, and you could handle them yourself. If you had used ground attack aircraft not for side missions, but against the tanks and manpower of the enemy, the enemy would not have broken through the front and the tanks would not have passed. You don't have to be a Hindenburg to understand this simple thing while sitting on the Crimean Front for two months."

The telegram bears obvious traces of acute annoyance, sharp impulsive discontent. It is precisely at their expense that the fundamentally incorrect remark about the "simplicity" of affairs on the Crimean front should be attributed. Another thing is that, despite the large posts he occupied, Lev Zakharovich in modern warfare was not able to qualitatively solve either "simple" or complex tasks.

Finally, it became clear at the very "top". On Stalin's instructions, a special directive of the Headquarters of the Supreme Command to the military councils of the fronts and armies of June 4, 1942 was prepared, which determined the main reasons for the defeat of our troops in the Crimea, and each of them was directly connected with the personality of the Headquarters representative:

- 1) complete misunderstanding of the nature of modern warfare;
- 2) the bureaucratic and paper method of commanding the troops ("T.t. Kozlov and Mekhlis believed that their main task was to issue an order and that the issuance of an order ends their duty to lead the troops ... As the analysis of the course of the operation showed, which the command of the front gave its orders without taking into account the situation at the front, not knowing the true situation of the troops ... "" On the critical days of the operation, the command of the Crimean front and Comrade Mekhlis, instead of personal communication with the commanders of the armies and instead of personal

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actions on the course of the operation, spent time at many hours of fruitless meetings of the Military Council");

- 3) personal indiscipline (Kozlov and Mekhlis violated the instructions of the Headquarters and did not ensure the timely withdrawal of troops behind the Turkish Wall. A two-day delay with the withdrawal was disastrous for the outcome of the entire operation).

All right, but clearly not enough. The Commander-in-Chief of the SKN Budyonny, the General Staff, and the Supreme Commander-in-Chief himself had to assume their own, and considerable, share of responsibility.

By the decision of the Headquarters, Mekhlis, as one of the "direct culprits of the unsuccessful outcome of the Kerch operation," was removed from the posts of Deputy Commissar of Defense of the USSR and head of the Main Political Directorate of the Red Army and reduced in rank by two steps - to the corps commissar. The commanding staff of the Crimean Front was also punished: Kozlov, Shamanin, Kolganov, Chernyak and Nikolaenko were removed from their positions and reduced in military rank. He lost his position, but remained in his former rank, Major General Eternal.

As for the personal guilt of the representative of the Stavka, that is, it is necessary to say more about what was not in the directive of the Stavka and could be. After all, the reasons for the defeat indicated there are derived, in essence, from the main thing: Mekhlis was an ominous product of the repressive, terrorist system of Stalinism as a whole. He, having received, in fact, absolute power in the Crimea, rose to the heights in the military department thanks not to his military leadership or organizational talent, but to his closeness to the leader, the ability to identify and eradicate "enemies of the people". Having comprehended the laws of the class struggle, such people are convinced that it costs them nothing to master the laws of armed confrontation. The main thing is pressure, party ideology, the ability to recognize an oppositionist, an alarmist, a saboteur in time.

It wasn't there. How rudely, but, in general, accurately responded the writer Viktor Astafiev: "Stalin's favorite Mekhlis undertook to command three armies in the Crimea, forgetting that editing Pravda and flattering Stalin, writing denunciations is one thing, but fighting - completely different. Manstein ... gave Comrade Mekhlis so much that there were no "heels left" from our three armies, as they write to me

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participants in this shameful and bloody massacre. Mekhlis is nothing, licked his lips and remained alive. Fuck off, bitch!"

But the same product of the Stalinist system as Mekhlis, only with the opposite sign, turned out to be another main participant in the Crimean tragedy - the commander of the front, Kozlov. He was more afraid of Mekhlis than the Germans, which was also noticed by Stalin, who did not deny himself the pleasure of later "talking" with the crushed defeat of the general. Yes, I was afraid because

that he remembered well how the head of the Political Directorate of the Red Army dealt with military personnel before the war, knew about his execution mission in July 1941 on the Western Front. And he had very good reason to believe that now it was his turn, since Mekhlis was sent to him, like that "black mark" that, in Stevenson's novel, the pirates sent to the apostate as a sign of death. All this gave rise to General Kozlov (and only if he had one) fear of the high authorities behind the Mekhlis, fear of responsibility, fear of opposing a decision that was reasonable from the point of view of military science to the illiterate, but ambitious pressure of the representative of the Headquarters.

Dmitry Timofeevich Kozlov was thoroughly crippled by the defeat of the front entrusted to him. Although already in the next year, 1943, he was returned to the rank of lieutenant general, he no longer rose to the former commanding heights. And all my life I felt like a disgraced, one must understand - undeservedly punished.

In 1966, he wrote to a former colleague, Lieutenant General of the Engineering Troops A.I. Smirnov-Nesvitsky, Chief of Engineer Troops of the Crimean Front: "Thank you very much for not forgetting the disgraced old general. My disgrace has been going on for almost 25 years. The events of those days often come to mind in my memory. It is hard to remember them, especially because the blame for the death of all our regiments lies not only with us, the direct participants in these battles, but also with the leadership that was carried out over us. I am not referring to Mekhlis, a layman in the operational art, but to the commander of the North Caucasus direction and Headquarters. I also mean Oktyabrsky (Admiral F.I. Oktyabrsky during the war years commanded the Black Sea Fleet. - A.R), who, in fact, did not fight, but prevented Petrov from fighting (Major General I.E. Petrov commanded the Primorsky Army, defending Sevastopol. - Y.R.) and played tricks on the Crimean Front. And now the hero has become! .. Get out-

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whether they are around the neck of the Crimean Front. Without this, there would be no Sevastopol...

I really regret not laying my head there. I would not hear injustices and insults, for the dead have no shame. But I did not succeed, despite the fact that I was leaving Yenikale with Volkov's rearguard units. Then there were no bosses, either small or big, there, everything passed into the power of Budyonny and his deputy Cherevichenko ... "!

Knowing the circumstances of what happened in the Crimea, the reader can now judge for himself how right General Kozlov was in his offense.

As for Mekhlis, the Crimea put an end to his ascent to the heights of his military career. Even Stalin, who had favored him for so many years, was forced to admit that illiteracy in military affairs, arbitrariness, and dictatorial habits of Lev Zakharovich posed a danger to the system of power that the leader personified. And therefore, he preferred, at least for the duration of the war, to push the Mekhlis into the background, giving way to real talents in military affairs, liberating commanders of all degrees.

Although, it must be admitted with bitterness, there was work for the Mekhlis.

## Chapter 8

### MEMBER OF THE MILITARY COUNCIL OF THE FRONT

### HOW TO RETURN THE LEADER'S TRUST

On June 4, 1942, the Deputy Chief of the General Staff, Lieutenant General Vasilevsky, reported to the Supreme Commander-in-Chief a draft directive of the Supreme Command Headquarters, summarizing the bitter lessons of military operations in the Crimea. He prudently avoided the issue of punishing the first persons of the front, believing that this was Stalin's prerogative. And I wasn't wrong. "All these

people should go before a military tribunal," the leader threw harshly. "But this will make it in time ..."  
He dictated to Vasilevsky the final part of the directive:

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Red Star, 2005, April 12.

"Remove the army commissar of the 1st rank comrade Mekhlis from the posts of deputy people's commissar of defense and head of the [Main] Political Directorate of the Red Army and reduce him in rank to corps commissar ..."

One can only speculate why later Stalin did not return to the idea of bringing the perpetrators of the Kerch catastrophe to trial by a military tribunal. Rumors circulated among the senior command staff that Mekhlis, having returned to Moscow, managed to get a reception from the leader. As soon as the former head of GlavPU appeared on the threshold of Stalin's office, he immediately fell to his knees and literally crawled to the owner who was standing in the far corner at the table. Grabbing him by the soft Caucasian boots, he begged for forgiveness, and Stalin, grimacing in disgust, convulsively tried to free his legs from the embrace of Mekhlis.

Who cares, but the author does not believe in this scene: it painfully does not correspond to the Mekhlis character. It is no coincidence that in the published memoirs of General of the Army Khrulev, who is sometimes referred to when broadcasting this episode in Stalin's office, there is nothing of the kind. Andrey Vasilyevich suffered a lot of unfair things from the former head of the GlavPU, but he did not begin to build false even on an old enemy, especially a defeated one.

Mekhlis himself admitted that "after Kerch, Stalin did not talk to me for six months."

One way or another, the leader treated Lev Zakharovich very mercifully. As, however, with the entire leadership of the Crimean Front, which the reader already knows. If such a large-scale defeat happened in 1941, neither the front commander nor other generals would be blown off their heads.

A week later, on June 12, the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks discussed the state of party-political work in the troops of the army in the field. Having revealed "significant shortcomings" in it - dryness, formality, conduct without regard to the situation, time, requests of various categories of personnel, specific combat missions, elimination of many members of military councils, commissars of units and formations from everyday painstaking work with personnel — The Central Committee demanded that it be radically improved. The order of the people's commissar of defense was also sustained in very harsh tones, the draft of which was developed as a result of a meeting of members of the military councils of several fronts, heads of political agencies and commissars of the united states.

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conference held in Moscow on July 6, 1942. This document contains, in our opinion, the most expressive assessment - "unacceptably bad", given by the top leadership of Mekhlis's activities as head of the Main Political Directorate from June 1941 to June 1942 (although his name was not directly mentioned). The main causes of shortcomings in party political work were associated with the same "clerical-bureaucratic style" of leadership.

Knowing the mores of the then authorities, we can say with confidence: if Lev Zakharovich returned from the Crimea not defeated, but a triumphant, these sharp assessments of the state of the Glavpurov economy would not have been in sight. And so the events went according to the popular proverb: all the bumps are on poor Makar.

Instead of Mekhlis, a candidate member of the Politburo of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks, secretary of the Central Committee and the Moscow Party Committee A.S. Shcherbakov. He also headed the Military-Political Propaganda Council, created under the Main Political Directorate to summarize the experience of party-political work in the troops and develop recommendations for its further improvement.



How did Mehlis react to these decisions? The writer David Ortenberg, who spoke with him in those days, recalled that he had never seen Lev Zakharovich so depressed even in the very first, most difficult days and weeks of the war. Our hero, who was left out of work, walked around his home office extremely upset, repeating: "That's it, it's all over." At first, without much enthusiasm, he took the news of the decision of the Politburo of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks to include him, apparently on Stalin's instructions, in the Council of Military-Political Propaganda. Was he not to know the leader's habit of often elevating his victim before finally finishing it off. And what, besides the slaughter, should have been expected after what happened? Subsequent events showed that the Supreme Commander gave him a chance to rehabilitate himself, although he no longer allowed him to take the first roles in the army.

Gradually, the usual self-confidence began to return to Lev Zakharovich. The storm seems to have passed by. For the first time since returning from the Crimea, we meet him at a meeting of the Military-Political Propaganda Council held on June 27. The corps commissar not only participated in its work, but also spoke on the issue under discussion - about work among the enemy troops.

In particular, he proposed to more boldly involve German emigrants, communists, prisoners of war in counter-propaganda, to change the content of newspapers in German, making them predominantly informational.

The comprehension and experience of what happened in the Crimea did not pass completely without a trace for Lev Zakharovich. In some ways, his judgments have become more flexible and vital. But they coexisted with the relapses of the old psychology, which were rooted in the desire to see someone's enemy intrigues in almost every shortcoming. For example, at a meeting on October 8, 1942, he regarded the delays in issuing guards badges to personnel, and appropriate stripes to the wounded, as "a deliberate undermining of confidence in the leadership, in Moscow."

By the way, no traces of Mekhlis's further participation in the work of the Military-Political Propaganda Council could be found. Obviously, he, as the only representative of the front-line leaders, while staying outside of Moscow, stopped participating in meetings in person.

His stay in the capital did not last long. On June 26, by a decree of the GKO, he was appointed a member of the Military Council of the North-Western Front. But he did not have time to leave for a new duty station, because on July 3, in connection with the expanding offensive of the Nazi troops, a new decision of the State Defense Committee was made - to bring the 3rd, 5th and 6th reserve armies to full combat readiness. Lev Zakharovich was appointed to the position of a member of the Military Council of the last OF THEM.

After that, his entire path until the very end of the war ran along the fronts of the army in the field. For a short time, until September 1942, while remaining a member of the 6th Army Armed Forces, he later held a similar position successively on nine fronts: Voronezh (September - early October 1942), Volkhov (October 1942 - April 1943), Reserve (April 1943), Bryansk (July-October 1943), formed on its base Baltic (October 10-20, 1943), 2nd Baltic, renamed from Baltic (October-December 1943), Zapadny (December 1943 - April 1944), 2nd Belorussian (April - July 1944), 4th Ukrainian (August 1944 - May 11, 1945). The only exception was the short

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Naya service as a member of the Armed Forces of the Steppe Military District (April 18 - July 6, 1943).

The reason for such a frequent change of places was not only official necessity, but also, judging by archival documents and testimonies of colleagues, Mekhlis's extreme quarrelsomeness, intrigue, the desire to crush the next commander, to make him "tame", "pocket".

As soon as the corps commissar arrived in the 6th Reserve Army, it almost immediately became part of the Voronezh Front, formed on July 7, 1942, which fought stubborn defensive battles in the middle reaches of the Don, in the Voronezh region. Lev Zakharovich tried not to succumb to routine and apathy, which is natural for many in such a demotion. "He eats dust and heat... There is a special surge of vivacity in the work," he wrote to his wife on July 13. "The main thing is to overcome the carelessness of people, the mood of drift, bureaucratic optimism in the face of inactivity. Victory does not come by itself, it must be achieved by intense smart work, by organizing people.

Recall that during the Great Patriotic War it was one of the most tense and critical moments. From July 7, the Soviet troops of the Southern and Southwestern fronts, on the orders of the Headquarters, retreated to the Don, trying to avoid encirclement by a many times superior enemy. By mid-July, the breakthrough of the strategic front in the south had reached 150-400 km in depth. Donbass and the right bank of the Don were captured by the enemy. And when he managed to reach the big bend of the Don, to occupy Rostov-on-Don, there was an immediate threat of a breakthrough to the North Caucasus and to Stalingrad. On July 28, Stalin, as People's Commissar of Defense, signed the famous order No. 227 "Not a step back!" Retreat without an order, he declared a serious crime, which was punished to the fullest extent of wartime. In addition, as a punitive and corrective measure, in accordance with this order, penal units and barrage detachments were established in the Red Army.

For all its severity, Order No. 227 could not stop the withdrawal of our troops as a whole, however, in some sectors of the front they not only entrenched themselves, but also launched a counteroffensive. This, in particular, happened in the zone of the 6th Army, which on August 6-7

'RGVA, f. 40884, op. 1, d. 74, l. 26.

led an offensive operation against the 2nd Hungarian army. Our troops crossed the Don south of Voronezh and captured bridgeheads on its western bank. "Things are not bad, but the situation is tense," Lev Zakharovich reported on 14 September. "We grind a lot of enemies – Hungarians and Germans, every day."

It is interesting to observe the reaction of Mekhlis to the above-mentioned order of the People's Commissar of Defense No. 227. In spirit, he is very close to the order of the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command No. 270 of August 16, 1941, for the implementation of which, as the reader remembers, Lev Zakharovich at one time spared no effort, without stopping before execution without trial of officers and even generals. In this case, the corps commissar, for some reason, did not finish it. At least, this was the conclusion of the inspectors from the GlavPU of the Red Army. On August 10, they reported to Shcherbakov that the formation of barrage detachments, as prescribed by the 227th order, in the 6th Army "is going slowly and does not meet the requirements of the people's commissar... semi-literate, from the occupied regions... In the first detachment of the Mekhlis formation, the report further said, again 44 people had to be replaced as inappropriate... It was established that this detachment was not ready for combat operations.

Most likely, there was an oversight of a member of the Military Council and his subordinates. There is not the slightest reason to suspect Lev Zakharovich of sabotaging Stalin's order; he highly valued the "mobilizing role" of detachments and penal units. So, without hesitation, he sent to the penal battalion the cowardly political officer of the company of the 959th rifle regiment of the 309th rifle division V.P. Ignatiev.

But the experience of the war did not go to waste for him either: he gradually began to incline towards the realization of the need not only for punitive measures, but also for the psychological hardening of the personnel. Commanders and political workers could and should have regained the will to fight steadfastly on the line they occupied, and trust in their own courage to the fighters. However, a member of the Army Armed Forces had to state that not everyone is ready to carry out this responsible mission. At one of the rare meetings of the Military-Political Propaganda Council, where he

'TsAMO, f. 203, op. 2847, d. 9, l. 127.

managed to visit, Mekhlis told about the case when a German company crossed the Voronezh River without a single shot from our side. It turns out that at this time even the guards went to the rear, to the meeting. Such was the style: if the regimental commissar needed to work with agitators, instead of going to the companies, he would collect them at his place. The secretary of the Komsomol bureau acted in the same way.

"It is necessary to cultivate love not for the rear, but for the front, for the front line," Mekhlis reasonably emphasized, criticizing the political workers of the army. Meanwhile, the head of the political department of the 141st Rifle Division was not seen for more than two weeks in the regiment where the Germans were crossing the river. The head of the political department of another, the 160th Infantry Division, also preferred to work in the rear, not appearing at the forefront for weeks. Can such political workers instill in their subordinates stamina in battle, instill courage in them, the corps commissar rhetorically asked.

He also showed uncharacteristic flexibility in promoting Order No. 227. On September 19, that is, almost two months after the order was published, a member of the Armed Forces oriented the propaganda team at the political department of the 6th Army in the following way: and the order of comrade. Stalin ... If at first we focused on the fact that we lost a lot in the war (on this, as Mekhlis said below, the Germans speculated. - Yu.R.) and we need to resolutely discard complacency and arrogance, now we must emphasize that this order is an order for victory over the enemy!

The opportunity to realize on a broader basis his ideas about new priorities in party political work, taking into account the changed situation, Mekhlis fell very soon: on September 25, by a decree of the State Defense Committee, he was appointed a member of the Armed Forces of the Voronezh Front. It is curious that Shcherbakov sent Stalin a proposal for his appointment to this position on July 9th. But the Supreme Commander-in-Chief only after two and a half months came to the conclusion that it was enough for the former head of the GlavPU of the Red Army to play secondary roles. Lev Zakharovich reported this more than joyful news to his wife in few words: "I moved to another place - a little further north than I was. At a new job... Getting to know the environment, people...»

'RGASPI, f. 386, op. 1, d. 14, l. 51.

But a week later, a new appointment followed - to the Volkhov Front. The theater of military operations was partly familiar to Lev Zakharovich from his trips as a representative of the Headquarters in the autumn and winter of 1941-1942. He also knew the commander of the front, General Meretskov. "I have a lot to do," Mekhlis wrote on October 28. - Endless work. All new places, and you have to start with the basics. Distances are big, very big. I need to travel more... I speak a lot at meetings and rallies...!" Despite the complication of the tasks to be solved, he finally breathed a sigh of peace: sending him to one of the most important fronts, which, together with the Leningrad Front, was preparing to break the blockade of the city on the Neva, meant that Stalin had finally forgiven him.

And the newly minted lieutenant general (namely, this military rank was received by Mekhlis with the abolition of military-political ranks in the Red Army at the end of 1942) sought to justify the trust. The name of the leader did not leave the lips of the new member of the Armed Forces of the front. Almost every paragraph of the report "On Political Work in the Offensive Operation", which he delivered on January 9, 1943 to the political workers of the 2nd Shock and 8th armies, began with the praises of the Supreme Commander. Panegyrics in the same address are equipped with other of his speeches: praising the leader has long become an obligatory ritual.

However, at the same time attention is drawn to the greater than before, criticality, efficiency of Lev Zakharovich's judgments. He justifiably criticized the party political apparatus for its template. By the end of 1942, the situation at the front had changed dramatically, and many political workers were still repeating in the spirit of Order No. 227, which was relevant for the summer and early autumn. In the same way, the slogan that the fate of the war was decided in the south, near Stalingrad, was wrong for the Volkhov, Voronezh and other fronts: there he relaxed people.

It was during his stay on the Volkhov front that the former head of the GlavPU studied and pondered the problems of military education and political work, and much more closely than before. At the same time, Stalin's works, documents of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks, orders and directives of the people's commissar of ob-

'RGVA, f. 40884, op. 1, d. 75, l. 2.

rona and the head of the Main Political Administration. But not only. "With the assignment of command ranks, the issue of improving military qualifications became acute. I have the richest experience. We need to enrich him with our military science," Lev Zakharovich wrote to his wife, asking him to find him books on military psychology, "which interest me very much."

They were interested to such an extent that Mekhlis did not limit himself only to the study of specialized literature, but also tried to "theorize" himself. "In war, the flesh finds expression in the animal instinct — self-preservation, fear of death. The spirit finds expression in the patriotic feeling of the defender of the motherland. Between the spirit and the flesh there is a subconscious, and sometimes conscious struggle. If the flesh takes over the spirit, a coward will grow up in front of us. And vice versa," he reasoned, speaking of ways to strengthen the offensive spirit of the soldiers.

In his speeches, Lev Zakharovich constantly turned to examples from military history, not only domestic, but also Ancient Rome, the Ottoman Empire, Prussia, often quoted, though somewhat monotonously, K. Clausewitz, F. Engels. Particular attention, this is clearly seen, was paid to the heritage of A.V. Suvorov, combat traditions of the pre-revolutionary Russian army. Following Stalin, he understood what a life-giving source of national self-consciousness, honor and dignity in war conditions is the appeal to the glorious battle pages of the past, how contemporaries enthusiastically draw confidence in victory in the patriotic deeds of Alexander Suvorov and Fyodor Ushakov, Alexander Nevsky and Mikhail Kutuzov. He simplified a lot, but even this was an undeniable progress for a person who had previously drawn heroic pathos almost exclusively from the history of the Civil War.

In a telegram to the Main Political Directorate, thanking for the help in sending films, he simultaneously complained that the picture "Suvorov" was received in one copy: "And you need to have twenty copies of it, because it is indispensable for the education of a soldier." And the parable about how Empress Elizaveta Petrovna wanted to encourage young Suvorov, who was standing on the clock, for his zeal, but the future great commander refused to even receive an award.

'RGASPI, f. 386, op. 2, d. 2, l. 70.

from the hands of the monarch, referring to the prohibition of the "Guard Regulations", Lev Zakharovich considered it so demonstrative for the education of a disciplined fighter that he told his listeners more than once, and then, on other fronts.

The problems of maintaining high military discipline, apparently, greatly disturbed him, as evidenced by the numerous traces of reflections on this subject in the papers of Mekhlis. Arriving at the Volkhov front, he noted with bitterness the growth of crime both in general and in its individual, most dangerous types - betrayal of the Motherland, desertion, self-mutilation. Speaking to the workers of the special departments of the NKVD of the front, a member of the Military Council could not hide his amazement at the phenomenon of a rather massive defection to the side of the enemy: "It is striking that during this difficult war there were many traitors, that at the beginning of military operations was not up to the mark. It is striking that betrayal is still a widespread phenomenon!

What's the matter, he wondered. In the party, all oppositions (he put it more abruptly - "enemy agents") have been crushed, the kulaks, as a class, have been eliminated, the five-year plans have transformed the country, but there are still traitors. Why? In search of an answer, in this case, the habit of not delving into the analysis of the causes of collaborationism prevailed. According to Mekhlis, there are only two of them: "the shortcomings and mistakes of our punitive organs" and miscalculations in propaganda - they say, young people hardly know how the people lived before the revolution, and the exposure of the true plans of the Nazis regarding the USSR

poorly placed. Doesn't a political worker of this magnitude have a too narrow view of this highly complex problem?

Going over to the side of the enemy, serving the enemy - this controversial political and social phenomenon has captured hundreds of thousands of people in our country. It was the result of at least a number of reasons - major failures at the fronts, nationalist manifestations, social dissatisfaction of other representatives of the previously privileged classes, the desire of people who were surrounded to save their lives. Finally, for some of our compatriots, there is an acute rejection of Stalinism and a search (tragically)

'RGASPI, f. 386, op. 1, d. 16, l. 14, 16.

ski erroneous) allies in the fight against him in the camp of the enemy. Mekhlis was ready to reduce this entire spectrum, in fact, to one thing: not all potential enemies have been identified and propagandized, destroyed.

You read what the former head of the Main Political Directorate wrote, analyze his actions and see that he does not have an unequivocal answer to the question of how to strengthen discipline. On the one hand, it is not easy for Lev Zakharovich, who long ago believed in the universality of violence, to abandon his habitual attitudes toward punitive measures. On the other hand, he cannot but be aware that the Patriotic War, having raised some foam along the way, demanded the best patriotic qualities among the mass of Soviet people. And it is only necessary to find such forms of political work that will allow these qualities to be fully revealed.

"The more discipline is shattered, the more despotic measures have to be resorted to in order to impose it ... which do not always (emphasized by Mekhlis. - Yu.R.) give positive results," he once wrote down. "The commander ... must be trained to be demanding of subordinates, to be domineering. The rag-commander will not keep discipline. "But the commander... must be a fair father of a fighter. Do not allow illegal repressions, assault, lynching and swearing." "Subjugate people without humiliating them"! He added later. A very significant recognition for a person who, for a long time, did not recognize other means of establishing proper military order, except for punitive ones.

"THEY ARE FEARED, DON'T LOVE IT, MORE THAN THAT, HATE IT"

It turns out that it is legitimate to see a certain evolution in his views and business style? Let's not be in a hurry: teaching others any rules is easier than following them yourself. A true educator of people - whether a commander, a political worker - certainly cares about authority in the eyes of his subordinates. Real authority earned by an example of conscientious performance of one's duty, respect for people is a powerful factor in influencing them. It seems that Mekhlis understood this, but he did not always demonstrate it in practice.

! RGASPI, f. 386, op. 1, d. 15, l. 25, 26; d. 27, l. 18, 29.

In September 1943, Major V. Koroteev, a correspondent for Krasnaya Zvezda, worked in the troops of the Bryansk Front. What did an ordinary journalist have to hear, what to become a witness in order to decide on a letter addressed to the secretaries of the Central Committee of the party Malenkov and Shcherbakov, completely devoted to the attitude of the front troops towards Mekhlis. "They are afraid of him, they don't like him, moreover, they hate him," Koroteev said. - The origin of this hostility is apparently caused by Comrade Mekhlis's brutal reprisals against commanders in the south, on the Voronezh and Volkhov fronts, the news of which apparently spread in the army and about which here, on the Bryansk front, also know."

The correspondent cited several facts confirming that the sharp temper, sharpness, peremptory nature of Mekhlis also flourished here. Some of the facts for any other political worker of this level would be simply deadly. "Every change in the command or political composition on the Bryansk Front, probably not without reason, is attributed to a new member of the Military Council. In the first days of Comrade Mekhlis's arrival here, the deputy was replaced.

Chief of Staff of the Front Colonel Ermakov. Ermakov was highly respected by people as an intelligent and experienced, truly charming commander who knew how to organize order at the headquarters ...

Ermakov was replaced by Colonel Fisunov, the former secretary of Comrade Mekhlis. According to the commanders, which. it is necessary to divide, after the replacement of Ermakov, order at the headquarters did not increase at all, because. Fisunov's concerns mainly concern Voentorg.

Such examples are not isolated, people are intimidated, emphasized Koroteev, confessing how difficult it was for him to decide on a letter and that he only tried to open the eyes of the leadership, "so that the Central Committee of our party, comrade. Stalin would have known this mood of the commanders and political workers in relation to General Mekhlis. A naive correspondent, as if it was a secret for them.

As far as is known, there was no reaction to this letter, and it itself, having received the stamp "special folder", settled in the Kremlin archive. Such signals at the "top" were perceived rather as confirmation of the correctness of the Mekhlis line. For example,

'APRF, f. 55, op. 1, d. 29, l. 70-72.

P.A. Gorchakov, who after the war grew into a major political worker of the Armed Forces, and then the head of the political department of a rifle division, heard the following about Lev Zakharovich from the head of the GlavPU Shcherbakov: "He is a strict, demanding, sometimes even harsh party leader. They talk a lot about him. You understand that not everyone likes exactingness".

No wonder they say that bad glory runs ahead of a person. And it was not in vain that on the Bryansk Front they talked about the reprisals of a member of the Armed Forces with command and political cadres at their former duty station. There were no exaggerations here. As soon as he arrived at the Volkhov Front, he immediately removed from his post the head of the political department of the rear of the 2nd shock army, the senior battalion commissar V.P. Popova: it turned out that he did not seem to communicate the orders and directives of the head of the GlavPU of the Red Army to the personnel. The same fate befell the deputies for political affairs of the commanders of the 310th and 376th rifle divisions, regimental commissars S.I. Shamanin and D.P. Lankova.

There were, of course, exceptions. When Mekhlis found out about the shortage of bread in the 37th and 38th ski brigades, he gave the head of the rear of the front, Major General of the quartermaster service L.P. Grachev, the instruction of the perpetrators "immediately remove them from their posts and judge", and warn everyone, "that those who like to play on the stomachs of soldiers will answer with their own heads"? The reaction is as swift and severe as necessary. It was like that when the 54th Army revealed serious violations of the GKO resolution of May 18, 1942 on the acceptance, accounting, storage and distribution of gifts from workers, for which many officials were brought to criminal and disciplinary responsibility.

But, alas, exceptions did not change the rule. Periodically shake up the staff without taking into account the real benefits of this measure - such a temptation Mekhlis could not overcome in any way. And here he was guided by completely different maxims that were reflected in his notes.

To make a decision about the fate of this or that commander, political worker, one must at least have a clear idea of the business, moral qualities of a person. Well, Lev Zakharo-

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Gorchakov P.A. Time of anxiety and victory. M., 1977. S. 169. ? TsAMO, f. 204, op. 83, d. 155, l. 77-7706.

vich also studied footage. But how? The level of such "study" is given by notes from his notebook.

Here are just a few excerpts: "2nd Shock. Vizzhelin - Chief of Staff. I don't want to work in such an environment, the commander does not lead, they set me up with useless people, I will shoot myself today. Sokolov (commander. - Y.R.) called the chief of staff [aba] a bastard. quarreled

Sokolov with the chief of staff ... The chief of staff says that S [about] is a tyrant. Lieutenant colonel Leskov, head of the operations department, is a worthless person." Etc.

Information that looked more like banal rumors and gossip was supplemented by political labels, which made them truly dangerous for those who became the object of study. For example: "59 A. (army. - A.R.) The head of the political department Tokarev is a former Socialist-Revolutionary. Timidly approaches all questions. Didn't fight..." Clarifications such as "son of a clergyman", "former Menshevik (Socialist-Revolutionary)", "family in the occupied territory", etc. are not uncommon. And almost always they decided the service career, and sometimes the further life path of a person, and not business and personal ones.

quality.

Not infrequently, the former head of the Main Political Directorate, out of an ingrained habit, hacked at the shoulder. As a member of the Military Council of the 6th Army, he suspected the commander of the 19th railway brigade, Colonel A.N. Tkachev in wrecking on the grounds that the officer, based on the combat situation, blew up the bridges across the Don. He was hardly convinced that only this measure did not allow the Nazis to cross the river.

An expressive incident was cited in his memoirs by the commander of the 108th Infantry Division during the war, Major General P.A. Teremov, he became his witness on the NP of the commander of the 50th Army, Colonel-General I.V. Boldin. The commander, together with a member of the Armed Forces of the Bryansk Front, Mekhlis, watched our bombers moving towards the front line. Unleashing their bomb load on enemy positions, the planes went into a dive and disappeared from view behind the treetops. Suddenly, Mekhlis announced that they were bombing their units. Boldin objected: they say, for sure

'TsAMO, f. 32, op. 11309, d. 116, l. 305, 307.? Kabanov P.A. Steel tracks. M., 1973. S. 138.

it is impossible to say, the battlefield is not visible. No, the member of the Military Council stood his ground. And then he ordered: to judge the leader, to remove the rest of the pilots from flying.

On Boldin's instructions, the author of the memoirs quickly went to the 413th Rifle Division, the advance of which was assisted by aviators. Only the operational report of her commander to the NP of the army commander that the pilots had bombed perfectly saved them from the tribunal.

It would be unfair to hide from the reader that we have other opinions about the personal and business qualities of Mekhlis. In October of the same 1943, Zaporozhets, a member of the Military Council of the 63rd Army, asked him to support his petition for transfer from the Central Front to the Bryansk Front, directly subordinate to Lev Zakharovich. At one time, let us recall, Zaporozhets replaced Mekhlis as head of the Main Directorate of Political Propaganda, but then he "decreased" - he became a member of the Military Council of the front, and later, of the army. Nostalgia for the former government or some other motives drove Alexander Ivanovich's hand, but he did not stint on unctuous words: "The style of your work, your attitude towards people, the ability to solder the team and rely on it - to demand strongly and be sensitive - this is the style of Stalinist work, and from you, Lev Zakharovich, I ... learned a lot ...

I beg you, Lev Zakharovich, take me out of here, because they will bury me here again..."?

K.F. Kalashnikov?

It turns out that there were people who believed in the patronage of our hero and were satisfied with the work under his leadership.

A certain imprint on the personnel policy of Mekhlis was left by the abolition of the institution of military commissars in the Red Army and the establishment of complete unity of command. Of course, it was not easy for Mekhlis to break himself, to revise the

! Teremov P.A. Burning shores. M., 1965. S. 47. ? RGASPI, f. 386, op. 1, d. 51, l. 2. 3  
Kalashnikov K.F. The right to lead. M., 1981. S. 78.

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Civil war ideas about the overwhelming role of the commissar. He opposed the liquidation of this institution with all his might.

As Chief Marshal of Artillery Voronov recalled, Shcherbakov and Mekhlis became aware of the contents of the report that he sent to Stalin under the impression of what he saw near Stalingrad in August 1942. "I reported to the Supreme Commander," Nikolai Nikolayevich wrote, "that very urgent measures are needed to raise the authority of the commanders so that they can be fully, solely responsible for everything good and bad... It must be admitted that the extensive institution of military commissars in the army at this stage, it is a simple transfer to the modern army of the long-standing and outdated experience of the civil war of 1918-1921. It is necessary to move to unity of command as soon as possible." According to Voronov, the present and former heads of the Main Political Directorate strongly objected to this. And when the decision nevertheless took place, Mekhlis, in the circle of his associates, spoke of Voronov only as a "liquidator of commissars."

Due to party discipline, however, he was forced to present himself as a champion of the introduction of one-man management. The Decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR dated October 9, 1942, which issued this decision, he publicly called the "major milestone" in the reorganization of the Armed Forces, which the Headquarters carried out during the war. At a meeting of deputy regimental commanders for the political affairs of the Volkhov Front in early January 1943, he even urged "to step aside a little in front of our commander, to give him a move, to give him the opportunity to quickly and firmly feel like an all-powerful one-man commander". Somewhat unusual for him, but a fact: a member of the Military Council of the front even took under protection those of the commanders who, "on the most trifling occasion, on an accidental slip of the tongue," were brought to party responsibility. "Is this how we bring up unity of command?" he asked sacramentally.

In relation to command personnel, over time, he developed a characteristic feature: he could tolerate leniency towards an officer of a company, regimental level and, with rare exceptions, did not let anything down to the first officials of divisions, corps, and armies.

'RGASPI, f. 386, op. 2, d. 2, l. 90.

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On the Volkhov front, for example, he stood up for the former regiment commander Kolesov, who was groundlessly brought to party responsibility. And at the request of the chief surgeon of the front, Professor A.A. Vishnevsky achieved an order for the major of the medical service Berkovsky, who was undeservedly bypassed with awards. On the Western Front, he actively contributed to the reinstatement of the deputy commander of the 91st Guards Rifle Division for the rear, lieutenant colonel of the commissary service I.V. Schukin.

On the other hand, on the same Western Front, the commander and head of the political department were severely punished for drunkenness in the 8th Guards Artillery Brigade at the insistence of Mekhlis. Moreover, the political worker is stronger: he was removed from his post. The commander of the 222nd Smolensk Rifle Division, Major General F.I. Gryzlov, when a member of the Military Council of the front found out that the divisional commander was abusing the awards of his subordinates, especially women medical workers. By order of the front, Gryzlov was reprimanded, while the People's Commissar of Defense received a petition to remove him from his post.

... COMMANDER - "IN THE POCKET"

The higher the post, the greater the demand. This is a good principle of action for a leader, unless, of course, objectivity fails him. But to assert this in relation to Mekhlis



hardly possible. In his relations with the leadership of the fronts, where Lev Zakharovich had a chance to serve, he clearly could not get rid of the old habits that appeared as a result of the enormous power that he was previously endowed with.

True, the failure in the Crimea - this point of view was expressed by Marshal Meretskov - apparently convinced Mekhlis that he did not master the art of war, and therefore he concentrated on political work and organizing the supply of the front with everything necessary. He did this much better, and, say, he made a considerable contribution to the preparation of Operation Iskra to break the blockade of Leningrad.

On the Bryansk Front, changes in him were also noted by General A.V. Gorbatov, commander of the 3rd Army. Their acquaintance with Mekhlis began with an acute conflict back in Moscow in the autumn of 1941. Tem

the confession of a member of the Military Council, about which Gorbatov writes as follows, sounded impressive to Alexander Vasilyevich: "When we were already behind Orel, he suddenly said:

- I have been looking at you for a long time and I must say that I like you as an army commander and as a communist. I followed your every step after your departure from Moscow, and I did not quite believe what I heard good things about you. Now I see that I was wrong...

After this conversation, L.Z. Mekhlis began to visit us in the army more often," Gorbatov continued, "he lingered for tea and even complimented me and my wife, which was completely out of his habit!"

As a member of the Armed Forces of the Bryansk Front in the summer of 1943, he participated in the Battle of Kursk, for which he was awarded the Order of the Red Banner, the first for him during the war years. The 2nd Belorussian Front remained to him a memorable participation in the operation "Bagration" and the commander's order of Kutuzov, 1st degree. Since July 1944, on the shoulders of Mekhlis, the epaulettes of a colonel-general appeared, which even at the end of the war only a few of his equals in official position could boast of. Let's not forget that he continued to be a member of the Organizing Bureau of the Central Committee of the Communist Party, until May 1944 - Deputy Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR. All this also distinguished him among not only the members of the military councils, but also the commanders of the fronts, the highest military officials of the central apparatus.

It was very difficult for the former deputy commissar and head of the Main Political Directorate to bow his head to anyone, except maybe Stalin. His imperious, unbridled nature now and then made itself felt. From Meretskov's memoirs, for example, the fact of a gross scandal arranged by Lev Zakharovich to the representative of the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command in the northwestern direction, Marshal Voroshilov, is known. A similar incident was recalled by Chief Marshal of Artillery Voronov, who, as a representative of the Headquarters, was in July 1943 on the Bryansk Front. On the day the front offensive began on July 12, Mekhlis "rapidly ran into" him, accusing him of excessive consumption of ammunition, that the artillery was left without shells. "My transition to the counteroffensive was more effective,"

' Gorbatov A.V. Years and wars. Ed. 2nd, M.. 1989. S. 225.

Voronov recalled. "I offered to put things in order with the delivery of ammunition left in the old firing positions."

Scolding, expressing dissatisfaction, sometimes without any reason at all, was a kind of habit with Lev Zakharovich. Quite possibly, in this way he emphasized his adherence to principles, exactingness, tried to convince others that these qualities are inherent in him, regardless of the turn of his career. Army General Khrulev, head of the Logistics of the Red Army, who had seen a lot of injustice on the part of the Mekhlis, recalled how the members of the military councils of the fronts behaved in the event of any shortcomings in the work of the rear organs. Most of them, including members of the Politburo of the Central Committee of the party Khrushchev and Zhdanov, who had direct access to Stalin, did not turn to him on every occasion, but sought to sort out the situation themselves. But here are two - Bulganin and Mekhlis - differed in other "talents": knowing how painful

The Supreme Leader reacts to such information, they did not miss the opportunity to be the first to present him with a "sensational" message. True, they often got into a mess.

Khrulev gives an example when, at one of the meetings with the participation of commanders and members of the Armed Forces of the fronts, Stalin asked if anyone had any complaints about material support. Everyone was silent. "Only Mekhlis said," the memoirist recalled, "that the rear is working very poorly, does not provide the troops with food in full ..." The angry Stalin immediately summoned Khrulev to a meeting and offered to explain himself. The head of the rear dared to ask who was complaining and about what. "What do you think?" was the counter-question.

Khrulev writes further: "I answer: Most likely, this is Mekhlis. As soon as I uttered these words, there was an explosion of laughter in the office. It intensified even more when, at the request of the Supreme Commander-in-Chief, Mekhlis outlined the essence of the claims: "You all the time do not release us bay leaves, vinegar, pepper, mustard." Here, too, the absurdity of Lev Zakharovich's claims became clear to Stalin!

One gets the impression that Mekhlis sometimes had nothing to do. "I knew him for a long time," writes David Ortenberg, "a man with frenzied energy, tireless. But here, at the front, he was different.

' Khrulev A.V. The test of war. S. 26.

It used to be that I went to the front command post, I see that he is resting: he starts a record with the same song ten times! Is it Mekhlis?!"

What really fascinated him was the tug-of-war of power with the commanders and other high-ranking officials of the fronts. This unworthy occupation, like a kind of litmus test, shows Mekhlis's vision of the functions that were given to such a political institution as members of military councils. At the same time, we are talking about unwritten functions, not fixed in the governing documents, but in practice existed with the active support of the party elite.

Military councils, as collegiate bodies of military leadership, usually operated during the war years in the composition of three persons: the commander of the front (army) troops - chairman, the first and second members of the council. The first member of the Military Council - namely, Mekhlis was in this post - was supposed to deal with operational issues, together with the commander, sign all operational documents, orders and reports to Headquarters. He also directly supervised the political department (department), controlled the activities of the military prosecutor's office and the tribunal. The second member of the Military Council oversaw the rear structures.

In fact, it turns out that many functions were of a formal nature. The signature under the operational documents was rather a symbolic act for the members of the military councils, since the lack of proper military qualifications (former party functionaries, they were not military professionals) did not allow them to fruitfully participate in the development of operational documents. Under these conditions, the members of the Armed Forces who thought most realistically and self-critically assessed themselves at least did not interfere in the functions of commanders. The arrogant ones tried to independently control the troops and, in the vast majority of cases, failed.

One could focus on directing political work. But in the frontline, army level, there was an independent position of the head of the political department, the political department, who in practice led the work of this body. Thus, only general supervision, the need to

' Ortenberg D.I. Stalin, Shcherbakov, Mekhlis and others. S. 182.

which is often questionable. In practice, there was a parallelism harmful to the business, duplication of functions (it is no coincidence that after the war a member of the Armed Forces of the military district became

at the same time the head of the political department). The military prosecutor's office and the tribunal also had their own heads, and here the role of a member of the Armed Forces was, in fact, reduced to giving general directives and political control.

Of course, any provisions, instructions determine only the general line. The concrete content of paragraphs and paragraphs gives a lively practical activity. In practice, despite the fact that commanders were in charge of the military councils, Lev Zakharovich tried to take this function upon himself. He hardly managed to overcome the temptation, as Stalin aptly put it after the Finnish campaign, to put the commander in his "pocket" and dispose of him as he pleases.

The events of the war, of course, could not but change something in Mekhlis. But something in him, on the contrary, was conserved, firmly fixed. For example, as before 1941, both in the Crimea in the winter and spring of 1942, and now in his relations with the commanders of the fronts, quarrelsomeness, suspiciousness, intrigues, the desire to crush, subdue him were common. Although the grounds for leadership, admittedly, he had few.

"He was an honest, courageous man, but prone to suspicion and very rude." "He perceived everything very simplistic and straightforward and demanded the same from others. He did not possess the ability to quickly reorient himself in a frequently changing military situation, and he considered the presence of this ability in others as unacceptable, according to his concepts, "applying to circumstances"," Meretskov, commander of the Volkhov Front, described his member of the Military Council.

General of the Army Gorbатов echoes him: "L.3. Mekhlis... was a tireless worker, but a stern and suspicious man, purposeful to the point of fanaticism, a man of extreme opinions and inflexible - that is why his energy did not always bring good results. An extremely biased person, who did not shy away from slandering the commander, was considered by Mekhlis and Army General S.M. Shtemenko,

! Meretskov K.A. In the service of the people. pp. 320-321.

speaking of an even later period - Lev Zakharovich's stay on the 2nd Belorussian Front.

There are other similar testimonies that lead to one conclusion: something, but even the Crimea did not teach Mekhlis the normal style of relations with the top officials of the fronts. And since this time the fate of the front brought him together with people not like the weak-willed General Kozlov, a member of the Military Council, as a rule, preferred a private report to Stalin over an open, principled conversation with them.

Here is what Marshal of the Soviet Union Konev told the writer Konstantin Simonov in 1965. When assigned to the Stepanov Military District (which was the strategic reserve of the Headquarters in anticipation of the Battle of Kursk), Stalin suddenly became interested in how Ivan Stepanovich assesses the chief of staff, General M.V. Zaharova. Konev spoke positively about Zakharov, he was supported by Marshal Zhukov, who was present during the conversation. "Then Stalin burst out laughing," I.S. continued the story. Konev, and says:

- Well, you see, what opinions - highly appreciate him, a good chief of staff, and Mekhlis raised the question of his removal, that he does not trust him.

So ... I learned, - the marshal remarked, - about another next act of Mekhlis.

In total, Lev Zakharovich spent about three months in the Steppe Military District. Konev turned out to be clearly too tough for him, for Ivan Stepanovich himself was distinguished by an iron will, a powerful character, and he didn't feel any difficulty reaching into his pocket for a strong word.

Mekhlis's passion for intrigue, however, did not cool off. He widely enjoyed a trusting relationship with the Supreme Commander-in-Chief. "He never hid anything from Stalin,"

Meretskov testified. Stalin knew this and therefore trusted him. As a result, if Mekhlis wrote about something to the Supreme Commander-in-Chief, retaliatory measures were taken very quickly. It really was. But if the marshal, in support of his idea, refers, in general, to a particular fact with the quick dispatch of officer epaulettes to the front after the intervention of a member of the Armed Forces, then we have much more expressive examples.

It was on the direct personal messages of Lev Zakharovich that in April 1944 he was removed from positions and was appointed with a demotion to

commander of the Western Front, General of the Army V.D. Sokolovsky. And already in June of the same year, his successor, commander of the 2nd Belorussian Front, Colonel General I.E. Petrov.

After a letter from Mekhlis to the Supreme Commander-in-Chief, an emergency commission of the Supreme Command Headquarters arrived in the troops of the Western Front, which found out the reasons for the failures in offensive operations in late 1943 - early 1944. Serious failures were indeed made here: not one of the eleven offensive operations was successful, despite heavy losses. Nevertheless, the commission headed by Malenkov, a member of the GKO, basically did not understand the essence of the matter, but searched for the guilty in accordance with Stalin's ready-made guidelines. The latter were formed on the materials of the Mekhlis report.

And heads flew, penalties rained down. For "unsatisfactory leadership of the front", General Sokolovsky lost his post. Lieutenant General Bulganin also got it, by this time for several months, as he had left the front. In the order of the Headquarters of the Supreme Command of April 12, 1944, he was reprimanded - let us pay special attention - "for the fact that, being a member of the military council of the Western Front for a long time, he did not report to the Headquarters about the presence of major shortcomings at the front".

It is curious that, obviously, in the accusatory rage, the members of the Malenkov commission in their report to Stalin, on the basis of which the decision of the State Defense Committee and the order of the Stavka cited above were adopted, suggested that the same penalty be announced to Mekhlis. And for the same guilt: they say, he did not report to the Headquarters. In the text of the order of April 12, however, this paragraph is no longer there: here, apparently, the leader did not interfere. He knew that the report was and, probably, considered it "inhumane" to let his faithful informant feel for himself what is behind folk wisdom: the first whip to the scammer.

A member of the Military Council of the Western (more precisely, after the aforementioned order of the Stavka - the newly formed 2nd Belorussian) Front, Mekhlis, took this impulse properly. Speaking to the command and political staff of the front, he obsequiously stated literally the following: the decision of the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command and the State Defense Committee "with Stalin's directness reveals the vicious style in the leadership of the troops and

`APRF, f. 45, op. 1, d. 481, l. 67.

operations", "the command of the Western Front did not like to reveal mistakes, covered them up". It was as if he himself had not been a part of this command for more than four months. He entered, but for the time being he was silent, accumulating facts.

Extremely negative feedback was given by a member of the Armed Forces to the chief of artillery of the Western Front, General Colonel of Artillery I.P. Chamber and the commander of the 33rd Army, Colonel-General V.N. Gordov. "The style of work is the headquarters on the side. Chatter and disclosure of secrets over the phone", "hatred of the political staff and security officers" - after such assessments, both generals were recalled from the Western Front.

Having received the explicit approval of the leader (otherwise the Stavka commission would not have worked exactly according to Mekhlis's recipes), Lev Zakharovich undertook to supervise the commanders with renewed vigor. And he reported, he reported ... Twice in less than a year, on his signals, General Petrov was removed from his post.

For the first time this happened just a month and a half later, as Ivan Efimovich became the commander of the 2nd Belorussian Front. General Shtemenko sheds light on the circumstances of the case in his memoirs: "Replacing I.E. Petrov was produced on the personal order of I.V. Stalin. Once, when Antonov (First Deputy Chief of the General Staff. - Yu.R.) and I arrived at Headquarters with a regular report, the Supreme Commander-in-Chief said that L.Z., a member of the Military Council of the 2nd Belorussian Front. Mekhlis writes to him about Petrov's softness, about his inability to ensure the success of the operation ("Bagration", to liberate Belarus. - Yu.R.). Mekhlis also reported that Petrov was allegedly ill and devotes too much time to doctors. For us, - emphasizes Shtemenko, - it turned out to be a complete surprise. We knew Ivan Efimovich as a selfless military commander who devoted himself entirely to the cause, a very reasonable military leader and a wonderful person!

How far Petrov turned out to be higher in spirit than his counterpart, he showed right there. "Given the psychological state of I.E. Petrov, it could be expected," Shtemenko writes further, "that in his report (during the procedure for his replacement by General G.F. Zakharov. — Yu.R.) he would not stint on gloomy colors, would

1 Shtemenko S.M. General Staff during the war. In 2 books. Ed. 2nd. Book. 1. M., 1985. S. 291-292.

facing difficulties... But nothing of the kind happened... Petrov reported truthfully. For him, even in this case, the interests of the cause were above all else, and personal resentment was relegated to the background.  
plan".

It so happened that Mekhlis and Petrov met again on the 4th Ukrainian Front. Stalin did not forget that at one time he had told him a lot of bad things about the former commander. The question is, why, then, was it necessary to send Lev Zakharovich precisely to this front, inflaming the old conflict? From the principle: divide and conquer? Yes exactly. Time has shown that Stalin, determining the suitability of Petrov as a military leader, listened more not to the true authorities, but to the same Mekhlis.

During the offensive in the Carpathians in September 1944, the Supreme Commander sent Marshal Zhukov to the neighboring 1st and 4th Ukrainian fronts to speed up the advance of our troops. At the same time, he instructed to find out how well the commander of the 4th Ukrainian Front and a member of the Military Council worked together. Zhukov highly appreciated the professional qualities of the commander. He also reported: "Petrov works in harmony with the Mekhlis, and Petrov has no claims against the Mekhlis." Shtemenko adds on his own behalf: "This postscript of the marshal was evidence of the greatest personal purity and tolerance of Ivan Efimovich Petrov, who understood the Mekhlis, understood, so to speak, the special features of his character and found the strength to cooperate with him, as required the duty and conscience of a communist."

Such a subtle psychologist and insightful person as Konstantin Simonov had the opportunity to observe the development of relations between the two leaders of the 4th Ukrainian Front. He accompanied the front commander and a member of the Military Council during their joint trips to the headquarters of the 1st Guards and 38th armies, observed them in everyday life. At first glance, there was nothing unusual in their relationship, even in small things.

For example, there is lunch at the headquarters of General A.A. Grechko. "Mekhlis, with an absolutely unexpected dexterity for me, took a bottle of vodka, beat sealing wax against the wall and, tapping the bottom with his palm, knocked out the cork.

"According to your method," he said to Petrov.

- But with the innovation, - said Petrov, - sealing wax against the wall -

it's you yourself.

When dinner appeared on the table, Mekhlis said that it was great for impromptu.

"There are no impromptu things with Grechko," said Petrov, smiling.

But the silence and smoothness were only on the surface. "Despite the outward politeness and correctness in their relationship, despite Mekhlis's restraint, I felt," Simonov recalled, "that somewhere deep down these people do not treat each other too well, and moreover for business reasons.

Petrov, apparently, did not want the slightest interference of Mekhlis in operational affairs and, emphasizing this, almost never, even out of politeness, did not turn to him for advice on these issues. And Mekhlis, as I noticed even earlier, seems quite consciously, emphatically abstained from any participation in the solution of operational issues.

Eliminate something eliminated, but compromising accumulated. And very soon put it into motion. As on the 2nd Belorussian Front, Petrov, not without the participation of a "vigilant" member of the Military Council, was relieved of the post of commander in March 1945. Moreover, in justification of his position, Lev Zakharovich again stressed the "morbidity" of General Petrov.

The former commander of the 38th Army, which was part of the 4th Ukrainian Front, Marshal of the Soviet Union K.S. Moskalenko. In mid-March 1945, when difficulties arose with the Moravian-Ostrava offensive operation that had just begun, he was called to the command post of the front. During the conversation between Petrov and Mekhlis with Moskalenko about the reasons for the hitch, a member of the Military Council wrote down the commander's considerations and transmitted them to Moscow by telegraph over the head of the commander. The headquarters urgently demanded a report from Petrov. On the same day, March 17, the next telegram signed by Stalin and the Chief of the General Staff, General of the Army A.I. Antonova:

"Personally to Petrov and Mekhlis.

' Simonov K.M. Different days of the war. In 2 volumes. T. 2. Ed. 2nd. M., 1978.

pp. 568, 711.

The Headquarters of the Supreme High Command considers the explanations of General of the Army Petrov dated March 17, 1945, unconvincing and points out:

1. The front commander, Army General Petrov, having established the incomplete readiness of the front troops for the offensive, was obliged to report this to the Headquarters and ask for additional time for preparation, which the Headquarters would not refuse. But Army General Petrov did not take care of this or was afraid to report directly about the unpreparedness of the TROOPS.

Colonel-General Mekhlis, a member of the Military Council of the Front, reported to the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks about the shortcomings in the preparation and organization of the offensive only after the operation was disrupted, instead of, knowing about the incomplete readiness of the troops, to warn the Stavka about this in a timely manner... »

The headquarters "last time" warned the front commander. And a week later, although things went much better on the 4th Ukrainian Front, Petrov went to a new duty station - the chief of staff of the 1st Ukrainian Front. Simonov left a record of a conversation with a member of the Armed Forces that took place at that time. In response to the writer's remark that Ivan Efimovich is a very good person, he followed: "Yes," Mekhlis said with a particularly dry note in his voice. And it seemed to me from this note in his voice that he was forcing himself to be objective. — He is a kind and sociable person. He is certainly one of our best specialists in mountain warfare. He knows this better than most. Maybe even the best. But he is a sick person. Do you know this?

- That is, how - painful? I asked.

— So here it is. There are sickly people, but..." Mekhlis stopped for a second. "But we will talk about this with you under other circumstances."

The interlocutors did not return to this topic, otherwise we would have learned in more detail about the Jesuitism of Lev Zakharovich. Characteristically, he still could not resist and asked what kind of conversation Simonov had had with Petrov before the latter's departure from the front. "In the question of Mekhlis "what did he tell you?" I felt a desire to find out, - the writer recalled, - what feelings Petrov feels after his removal and whether he considers that he owes this removal to him, Mekhlis. On this occasion, people say: the cat knows,

whose meat you ate.

As for the Supreme Council member himself, there was no talk of his dismissal, although, as we see, he still earned a reproach in the belated report "upstairs".

Under the pressure of such facts, popular notions, thanks to the efforts of official Soviet propaganda, about the purpose of members of military councils are crumbling. Behind the grandiose formulations about them as "representatives of the Party in the Armed Forces", in many cases the practice of covert control of the commanders and other officials of the fronts and armies was hidden. In essence, the system, rooted in the Civil War, was preserved, although somewhat modified, when a commissar was assigned to the commander-military specialist for overt supervision and control. Now such supervision was not advertised, but even the transition to one-man command in 1942 could not break this system. From the point of view of the political elite of the country, no official position of a single commander freed him from political supervision. And woe was to that member of the Military Council, who neglected this unwritten function entrusted to him. Zeal, however, was highly encouraged here. So General of the Army M.A. Gareev, there are considerable grounds for the point of view expressed by him that the members of the military councils were blamed not for omissions in the education of personnel, not for the low state of the offensive spirit of the troops, not for failures in operations, and not even for large losses, but "untimely denunciations, which, it turns out, , was considered their main function" (italics Gareev. — Yu.R.).

True, the question may arise: does Mekhlis really deserve censure? After all, the right of a serviceman to report his point of view to the higher command is directly provided for by military regulations. To inform the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks Lev Zakharovich was also obliged by the charter of the party. But the fact of the matter is that even in the atmosphere of that difficult time, since the 1930s, saturated with suspicion and distrust, many commanders and political workers, commanders and members of military councils built their relations on a principled basis, overcoming disagreements openly. , responsibility for guilt - real or attributed at the will of the leadership - was divided equally. Mekhlis preferred backstage

Gareev M.A. Ambiguous pages of the war. M., 1995. S. 201.

game, his personal dislike for the opponent skillfully draped with ostentatious concern for the interests of the case. Being an inflexible person, besides being inferior to the majority of military leaders in intellectual terms, not to mention operational and strategic training, he did not keep up with the dynamism of military operations and the situation at the front, the plans and actions of commanders and other officials. persons judged straightforwardly, simplistically. Strongly pressed on the political side. And, importantly, he masterfully exploited Stalin's passion for secret, behind-the-scenes methods of solving personnel issues, known to him since the 1920s. For which we blame the majority of those with whom Lev Zakharovich was brought along life's roads.

According to Simonov, he was "through and through, to the very depths of his soul, coldly and fundamentally merciless", "something like an ax that falls on someone's neck because it must fall, and even if she herself does not want to fall on someone head, then she cannot afford to stop in the air, because she must fall ... "!

"THIS IS NOT THE YEAR OF 1812 FOR YOU"

Of particular interest is the activities of the Mekhlis at the final stage of the war. At the beginning of October 1944, the troops of the 4th Ukrainian Front, where by that time he was a member of the Armed Forces, crossed the state border of the USSR and entered the territory of Czechoslovakia.

The work with the population of the country being liberated from the fascist occupation became paramount for the political apparatus. The general directive given in the GKO resolutions of April 10 and October 27, 1944 on the line of conduct of our troops on the territory of foreign countries and consisting, in particular, in providing the peoples being liberated with complete freedom in deciding the issue of their state structure and social system, was to implement in concrete work. First of all, on the territory of Transcarpathian Ukraine. Since 1919, it was part of Czechoslovakia, and after the dismemberment of the latter in 1939, it was part of Hungary, but the population was generally friendly towards the Red Army.

! Simonov K.M. Different days of the war. T. 2. S. 397, 712.

actually. Many expressed the desire to unite with Ukraine. These moods met with an approving response in the Kremlin, however, for the time being, unspoken. On the other hand, various political forces in Transcarpathia campaigned for the preservation of the status quo, and even for the transition to Hungary.

How was the front's special propagandists to act under these conditions? Mekhlis refracted instructions and directives received from Moscow taking into account local conditions. On behalf of the Military Council, he forbade, when working with the population, to touch upon issues related to the possible entry, or, as they said then, the reunification of Transcarpathia with Soviet Ukraine. The task was set to expose fascism and its Hungarian variety, Salashism, in every possible way, and to speak widely about life in the USSR. The people themselves had to come to the conclusion about the desirability of reunification.

Considering that the Slavic brothers of the region were mostly friendly towards the Red Army, the Military Council of the front released almost 7 thousand tons of grain to the population, of which more than one thousand was free, and the rest at prices significantly reduced compared to those in force under the German the Hungarian occupation; 9 thousand pounds of salt, 500 thousand liters of kerosene. Army first-aid posts, specially arranged in Mukachevo, Uzhgorod and other places, served almost 65,000 patients. Political, cultural and educational work was also launched with the population. This, of course, stimulated people's sympathy for the Red Army and the Soviet Union.

However, not everything went as planned. If, for example, in Mukachevo, at a meeting in the city government, public figures told Lev Zakharovich: "We would still like to be in alliance with Moscow, and not Prague," then in a number of other places Czech officers and officials intimidated the population, they suggested that with the end of the war, Transcarpathian Ukraine would remain part of Czechoslovakia. In the city of Berehove and the district, even the local communist party organization, which consisted mainly of Magyars, opposed joining the USSR. To get out of the situation, Mekhlis was ready for a lot, up to the purge or the complete dissolution of the local party organization.

The consequences of enemy propaganda were also overcome by force when replenishing the 1st Czechoslovak Army Corps, which was included in the 4th Ukrainian Front. In Michalovce

nationalist and pro-fascist elements blocked voluntary recruitment into the corps, and here, too, local communists were on the sidelines. Voluntariness temporarily had to be replaced by forced mobilization.

Since the entry of Transcarpathian Ukraine into the USSR was predetermined at the "top", a member of the Military Council of the 4th Ukrainian Front, publicly forbidding campaigning for such entry, secretly stimulated measures that worked for this idea. On instructions from Moscow, he even had a meeting with Czechoslovak President E. Beneš before he spoke with People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs Molotov. The lack of diplomatic experience did not prevent him from coping with the task: Benes agreed to the entry of Transcarpathia into the USSR.

After crossing the state border, and in addition to Czechoslovakia, the 4th Ukrainian Front also participated in the liberation of Poland, there was enough work not only for the employees of the 7th department of the political department



front. Mekhlis and the political apparatus of the front faced a new situation on the "internal" front as well. Lev Zakharovich defined its essence as follows: "Not only in the history of the Soviet Union, but in the history of our Fatherland - for the first time (emphasized by Mekhlis. - Y.R.) millions went abroad. Miscellaneous brought from there. Much of what we have seen is not clear to our people ... "

What exactly is not clear, he explained, speaking at a meeting of political workers of the 38th Army on March 2, 1945: how they live abroad (and, as it turned out, no worse than in the Soviet Union, despite the assurances of official propaganda. — Yu.R.) in the presence of a private economy, bourgeois democracy, a multi-party system? "And what would our people say if they visited America (skyscrapers, industry)?" he expressed fear. Lev Zakharovich was clearly frightened that millions of soldiers and officers involuntarily broke through the Iron Curtain, had the opportunity to compare their lives with what they saw in the capitalist West, and also to judge the degree of truthfulness and objectivity of Soviet propaganda. It was also frightening that information from the active army, one way or another, fell into the rear. If the Decembrists, participants in the Patriotic War of 1812, brought progressive ideas from Europe, he believed, now, through the wounded, through letters, "reaction,

capitalist ideology. It is necessary to take measures, to respond by strengthening political work - such is the leitmotif of his speech.

As a member of the Military Council of the front was informed, instead of increasing vigilance in every possible way, other servicemen marry foreign women, including German women, intercede for them and their relatives. To prevent such contacts, on April 12, 1945, Mekhlis, together with the commander of the front, General of the Army Eremenko, signed a resolution of the Military Council demanding that all measures of command and party influence be applied to the guilty.

Lev Zakharovich wanted people to renounce everything earthly, except for state interests, to forget about the house, "despicable" life, family ties. These sentiments are easily read in his last letter from the war dated May 4, 1945: "The kaput is about to come to all Germans. You look at Slovaks, Czechs, Poles – their Europe with its arrogant culture stands out for its slavish attitude to things and everyday life. Our man in this respect is several heads higher than the so-called Europeans, and he is, first of all, a statesman. |

The position of the member of the Military Council in this regard was uncompromising. Anyone who did not fit into the ideal of a "statesman" needed to be called to account. But to force people to completely succumb to social demagoguery, to close their eyes to the world, not to think, not to compare, was beyond the power of even such an experienced political worker as Mekhlis. Speaking at a meeting in the 38th Army on September 18, 1945, he was forced to admit that from abroad "even a part of the political workers came with ideological dislocations ... Some fall into the swamp of opportunism or into the clutches of enemy ideology." To all sorts of "doubtful" statements, to "unhealthy" moods of those arriving from abroad, respond immediately and sharply, he demanded.

Millions of victors of fascism returned from Europe to their homes, albeit destroyed, but so much liberated. After such an ordeal as the war, nothing frightened: neither the prospect of hard work in the name of the revival of a utterly destroyed economy, nor conspiracies like those about which even

'RGVA, f. 40884, op. 1, d. 76, l. 21.

For a century, propaganda has not ceased to make noise. And who would now, people simply reasoned, decide on some kind of conspiracies, on some kind of opposition to the system, the viability of which was confirmed by the Victory. What must have been the disappointment of our compatriots, whose expectations of change ran into the protective position of Mekhlis and his ilk. As if from a broken record, the words about the "bog of opportunism", "counter-revolutionary manifestations", "unhealthy statements" sounded again, an atmosphere of distrust, suspicion, fear was skillfully pumped up.

In this regard, during the war years, Lev Zakharovich became even more suspicious, even more sensitively capturing the mood "above". Undoubtedly, Stalin used the fruits of the victory of the Soviet people over fascism to preserve the totalitarian system, an extremely closed society. But it is equally certain that his relatives should share the responsibility for this with him. In such conservation of orders close to their hearts, they followed the instructions of the leader, but often anticipated them.

.. Mehlis ended the Great Patriotic War on the crest of the successes of his 4th Ukrainian Front, the liberator of Moravsk-Ostrava and Prague. Together with General of the Army Eremenko, he became an honorary citizen of the Czech city of Moravska-Ostrava. In his letter, dated April 13, 1945, the triumph of the winner clearly sounds: "I saw and was already on the damned German soil. Now the Germans understood what war is, what Russian hatred means. All of them are ready to declare themselves communists and Poles. Will not help".

After the end of the war, in the territory occupied by the troops of the front, shots often rang out. Operations continued to catch groups and single enemy soldiers and officers, and Bandera raids were repelled. At the same time, the troops were moving on to normal combat and political training. There was a settlement with military "debts".

One of the first resolutions of the Military Council of the front, which bears the signature of Mekhlis, concerned the fate of the fighters of the penal formations. The commanders were instructed to submit petitions for release from

punishment and removal

criminal record. Approval of the verdicts of military tribunals in relation to those sentenced to death The Military Council of the Front removed from the competence of military councils of armies, commanders of corps and divisions and assumed it. It was also instructed not to consider cases in the military field courts of divisions without the sanction of the front's armed forces.

Gradually, life in peace was established. In May, the 4th Ukrainian Front was disbanded, and its field administration was turned to the formation of the Carpathian military district with its center in Chernivtsi. Colonel-General Mekhlis was approved as a member of the Armed Forces of the PrikVO. His letter home on September 28, 1945 helps to judge about life here: "I live and work in the city of Chernivtsi ... The population is different from ours. There are many, many speculators, traders, people who do not like honest work. The bulk of them are Jews, formerly inhabitants of Romania. I personally live in a small two-story house, on the second floor there are two rooms, this is also my abode. The first office and dining room. The apartment is good, but you are not around, and sometimes it is sad to be alone, especially since I am alone in the house... Very often I am on the road, not close... Moving - by car, by plane. There is a lot of work, a lot, even there is not enough time to sit thoroughly over the book." About the same - in a letter to a long-time comrade at work, an employee of the affairs department of the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR P.G. Mishunin on January 7, 1946: "Very often on the road. Now, trips to the constituency are being added."

The campaign for elections to the Supreme Soviet of the USSR began, and according to the canons of that time, military figures of the caliber of Mekhlis were nominated as candidates for the country's highest legislative body. And they were definitely elected. Lev Zakharovich was no exception. "In my constituency, 99.5 percent of the voters voted yes," he wrote in a personal letter on February 12, 1946. A trip to Moscow was planned for the first session of the Supreme Soviet of the new convocation.

The war is behind. When you think about what mark Mekhlis left in her history, you are once again convinced that assessments cannot be unambiguous. It is unfair to deny his efforts in subordinating party-political work to the tasks of mobilizing the army to repel the fascist aggressors, in the formation of new units and formations and the restoration of those already participating in battles, in increasing the combat capability of the troops. However, subjectively

wishing to bring victory over the enemy closer, this military-political figure in many cases, voluntarily or involuntarily, made the path to it difficult. The lack of the necessary military professional training, negative personal qualities - suspicion, exorbitant lust for power, confidence in permissiveness, overestimation of one's own abilities led to the fact that the most responsible The rates of the Supreme High Command were carried out by him at great cost.

Mekhlis often consigned moral categories to oblivion, as allegedly incompatible with real politics, and considered his activities exclusively from a utilitarian standpoint: to what extent it corresponds to Stalin's instructions, the interests of the political elite, whose very existence for the first time in many years a real threat arose from the outside.

Under the conditions of incredibly difficult trials of the war, all this turned into frequent extrajudicial reprisals, an increase in the already strong tension in society, and the disappointment of a significant part of compatriots in the sanctity of those slogans that our hero proclaimed on behalf of the party and the Soviet state.

## Chapter 9

### COURT OF HONOR

#### “WHO IN HATS IS TO MEHLIS FOR RESPONDENCE”

On March 19, 1946, at the first session of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR of the 2nd convocation, Mekhlis was approved as the Minister of State Control of the USSR. Almost a five-year period has ended, which began on June 21, 1941, during which Lev Zakharovich was only listed as People's Commissar of the Civil Code, and worked in the military department. And so he returned to his usual path, to state control. That Stalin once again included him in the ranks of the highest state officials was irrefutably testified: military pages, including those with a “print”

of the Crimean catastrophe, turned upside down, the former trust of the leader is returned.

In Russian literature, the post-war decade is viewed as a time of growing crisis of the Stalinist model of a totalitarian state, as a period of accumulation of objective and subjective prerequisites for the subsequent overcoming of the legacy of Stalinism. The main, system-forming parameters of such a crisis in all spheres of life — political, economic, social, spiritual — are formulated: an unbearable course for the budget for super-industrialization, conservation of scientific and technological progress, the actual devastation of the countryside, the famine of 1946-1947 and significant food difficulties in the future, the curtailment of social programs, the expansion of repressive measures, ideological campaigns of a protective nature, the growth of social tension'. All or almost all of these processes were reflected in one way or another in the activities of our hero.

The field of responsibility assigned to the Mekhlis, compared with the pre-war period, has grown significantly: the number of ministries (former people's commissariats) and central departments supervised by the Moscow City Committee of the USSR increased from 46 in 1940 to 76 in 1946. Increased attention was required to the processes of transferring the economy from a military to a peaceful one, the restoration and further development of the country's economy, and the reduction of the Armed Forces with their enormous infrastructure.

The size of the state budget in the 4th five-year plan - more than 71 billion rubles, including capital investments in industry - 41.1, in agriculture - more than 11.5, transport and communications - about 7.7 billion rubles.

A serious obstacle to the implementation of the tasks assigned to the Ministry of State Control was the unresolved organizational and staffing issues, which were very neglected during the war years. Of the staff planned for 1946 of almost 3.3 thousand people, less than half were in the ranks -

1478. It was necessary to re-form the leading link both in the Center and in the union republics.

'See: XX Congress of the CPSU and its historical reality. M., 1991. S. 8; Zubkova E.Yu. Society and reforms 1945-1964. M., 1993. S. 100.

On April 11, 1946, the Council of Ministers of the USSR approved the candidacies of his deputies presented by Mekhlis — V.F. Popova (on general issues), A.S. Gafarova, I.E. Baranova, I.T. Skidanenko, V.A. Leontiev, A.Ya. Tsipko, S.G. Emelyanov, and a little later - the composition of the collegium of the ministry.

Personnel were the subject of special attention of the minister, as always, no matter what party or government post he held. He was urged to do this not only by factors of a general nature, first of all, by the shortage of inspectors in the territories and regions, on railways, large enterprises, in military districts, and in the fleets. He also had a personal reason to devote a considerable part of his time and effort to the issues of maintaining staff discipline, reducing the cost of managerial personnel - we recall that he also held the post of chairman of the State Staff Commission under the Council of Ministers of the USSR.

Advocating for the downsizing of other ministries and departments, Mekhlis, at the same time, constantly sought to expand his own apparatus. These actions reflected the growing political and economic crisis of the Soviet state system. The almost complete absence of incentives in the economy for high-quality productive work, the widespread use by the authorities of administrative, non-economic methods of extracting profit, the virtual absence of amateur forms of democratic control gave mismanagement, theft and abuse an unprecedented scale. Under these conditions, the actions of the Minister of State Control, whose awareness of the scale of economic crime certainly distinguished him from a number of top government officials, were ideally aimed at putting an overseer on every worker. Meanwhile, it was both impossible and useless, because no one has yet been able to prevent or even noticeably reduce the inefficient use of state, and in fact, nobody's property by administrative control alone. In addition, and Mekhlis was well aware of this, the state controllers themselves, including even his own deputies, could not avoid corruption.

Having formed as a politician under the domination of one, total state, form of ownership, knowing the only

control system - command-administrative in its most rigid manifestations, he saw the ways of solving the tasks assigned to him only in the constant build-up of control forces. This was often facilitated by the situation of emergency conditions, which, it is true, in many cases were derivatives of the same wasteful Stalinist system of managing the economy.

In 1946-1947, most of the territories of the Russian Federation, Ukraine, Moldova, some regions of Belarus and Kazakhstan were engulfed in famine. As established by studies of recent years, it was the result not only of the drought and post-war difficulties, but also of the short-sighted actions of the state leadership. Referring to the extremely unfavorable weather conditions and the danger of aggression from Western countries, the government decided to carry out surplus appraisal, the formation of grain reserves in volumes that exceeded even those that were in wartime, and the sale of grain abroad in order to obtain currency. In 1946, in the country as a whole, the state harvested 17.5 million tons of grain crops, that is, 44 percent of the gross harvest. In a number of regions of Russia, the share of grain procurements was significantly higher: for example, in Stalingrad - 86 percent of the gross harvest, in Saratov - 77, in Penza - 74. Even seed grain was handed over on account of state deliveries. The government went for the introduction of more stringent than in the war, the national consumption of bread and other types of food.

The famine caused an unprecedented wave of crime - theft of public and personal property, speculation in food products, theft of state stocks of grain, raw materials and finished products of the food industry. Under these conditions, Mekhlis entered the government with a proposal to create a State grain control within the framework of the Moscow City Committee of the USSR. In accordance with the Decree of the Council of Ministers of the USSR of November 24, 1946, such a structural unit with a staff of 1,800 people was created.

Given the severity of the situation, the minister had to personally go to the field, however, not so much for control, but for getting out.

! Zima V.F. Famine in the USSR in 1946-1947: origin and consequences. M., 1996. S. 10-11, 29. 2 GARF, f. 8300, op. 1, d. 93, l. 21.

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kolachivaniya from collective farms and state farms of bread. In particular, he carried out such a mission together with Beria in the farms of the Krasnodar Territory.

The next year, 1947, was no less difficult to provide the country with food. This was reflected in the scale of various crimes and abuses, adding work to state controllers. On instructions from the government, the Moscow City Conservatory audited 17 territorial administrations and 25 bases of the USSR Ministry of Food Reserves. As a result of the audit, a top secret decree of the Council of Ministers of the USSR "On theft, concealment from accounting, damage and unauthorized squandering of food reserves" was issued, which ordered that those responsible be brought to strict, including criminal, liability. By the beginning of 1948, in accordance with the requirements of this decree, more than 10 thousand financially responsible

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Mekhlis not only actively supported the country's top leadership's policy of artificially restricting public consumption, but also tried to use the current situation to expand his powers, and moreover, of a repressive nature. He claimed the right of the Ministry of State Control to conduct a final investigation into various economic violations, and then immediately, bypassing the prosecutor's office, to refer cases against the perpetrators to court. The CIM, thus, would turn into a kind of emergency body. This looked like nonsense even against the background of the growing repressive nature of the post-war Stalinist state, and Mekhlis's claims were rejected.

As a reflection of his deep conviction that total control can fully compensate for the organic shortcomings of the economic system, one should also consider his other proposals, embodied in the decrees of the Council of Ministers of the USSR "On State Control over the Acceptance and Preservation of Cotton" (dated July 11, 1947), "On the State Control of Railway Transport" (dated May 17, 1948), "On the State Control over the Preservation and Consumption of Alcohol" (dated July 16, 1949) and other similar measures to build up the network of controllers.

'Zima V.F. Famine in the USSR 1946-1947: origin and aftermath

actions. S. 126.

But Lev Zakharovich and this seemed insufficient. In January 1949, he announced the need to have similar structures in the MGC system also in the coal and oil industries, in certain economic regions, such as the Donbass, Kuzbass, and in the oil fields in Azerbaijan.

It would be a mistake to simplify the problem, to reduce it to straightforwardness in the views of only one leader of the Moscow City Conservatory of the USSR. Behind the massive theft and wastefulness, behind the weak effectiveness of the control and audit bodies, there were clear signs of the growing political and economic crisis of the Soviet state system.

The inefficiency of the measures taken by the state is also confirmed by the criminal statistics of those years. The number of crimes grew all the time, despite the fact that in the conditions of the post-war famine, the authorities went to an unprecedented tightening of laws - by decree of June 4, 1947, the maximum sentence for theft of socialist property was 25 years. The number of those sentenced to deprivation of liberty for a term of more than 10 years in 1947 increased 100 (!) times as compared with the previous year, and in 1948 another 3.8 times. By the end of 1947, approximately 380,000 people ended up in prisons and camps for stealing bread. Among them, a very large proportion were women and adolescents, which directly indicates that the crimes were committed precisely on the basis of hunger. Only a reasonable economic policy could bring down this wave, but not criminal and administrative measures, including the tightening of state control.

However, the Stalinist regime, which was falling more and more into a crisis, responded in the usual way - by "tightening the screws". To society, which was trying to become at least a little freer and more liberated with the victory over fascism, the authorities made it clear that hopes for liberalization were unfounded.

It is no coincidence that, having come to the leadership of the ministry, Mekhlis began to get rid of those whose political appearance caused at least some doubt. For three years, more than 60 people were fired from the central office for these reasons. The wording when explaining the reasons for the dismissal truly makes us recall the sad memory of the 30s: "he hid his stay in 20-23 years. in an anarchist youth organization", "sister of the enemy of the people", "worked in

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Yezhov's apparatus", etc. The protective tendencies, so manifested by Lev Zakharovich at the final stage of the war, received an additional impetus in the situation of the second half of the 1940s.

In accordance with the decree of the Council of Ministers of the USSR and the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks dated March 28, 1947, signed by Stalin and Zhdanov, so-called courts of honor were created in the ministries and central departments, which were supposed to consider "anti-patriotic, anti-state and anti-social - mortars" of managers, if they did not fall under criminal prosecution. The purpose of the courts of honor, as officially announced, was to promote the education of employees of state bodies in the spirit of Soviet patriotism, to maintain the honor and dignity of the Soviet worker. In reality, "patriotism" in the Stalinist-Zhdanov understanding was opposed to "low-worshipping the West" and "cosmopolitanism", and a blow was dealt to the intelligentsia and part of the managers who tried to think and act more broadly than the bipolar model of the world imposed by the political authorities for decades - "their own" and "strangers".

A noisy propaganda campaign unfolded in the country. Older people remember well the film "Court of Honor", based on the play by Alexander Stein. Actors Sukharevskaya and Pereverzev, Chirkov and Samoilov used their talents to bring to life a fake story about how a Soviet woman, a research worker, gives away the secret of an important invention for a bottle of French perfume. Konstantin Simonov responded to the theme of the venality of scientists with the play "An Alien Shadow" (for which he later reproached himself).

The courts of honor were not at all harmless. In the Ministry of the Armed Forces of the USSR, a group of honored admirals led by N.G. Kuznetsov, and the court of "honor" very quickly transformed into a criminal court, which ended for most of the defendants with real terms of imprisonment. At the Academy of Medical Sciences, scientists N.G. Klyuev and G.I. Roskin was unjustifiably accused of being associated with American agents and transferring to them an open method of fighting cancer and a therapeutic drug obtained as a result of experiments. Official propaganda immediately chose them as indicative

an object for a wide campaign of condemnation (it was they who became the prototypes for the heroes of the film "Court of Honor" and the play "An Alien Shadow").

Mekhlis, without delay, established a similar body of "justice" in his department. In a letter with which he addressed the members of the collegium of the ministry in January 1948, attention was drawn to the need to strengthen educational work with the supervisory staff, in political education it was proposed to "strengthen questions of the history of international relations, topics on the intrigues of foreign intelligence". On February 6, he made a report at a meeting of members of the collegium and party committee of the Moscow City Committee of the USSR, which discussed the decision of the Orgburo of the Central Committee, to the preparation of which Lev Zakharovich, as a member of the OB, was directly involved - "On the activities carried out by the ministries of the aircraft industry and the electrical industry in connection with closed letter of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks on the case of professors Klyueva and Roskin. The moral execution of medical scientists continued at the general meeting of the team. Qualifying their act as a direct betrayal, Mekhlis stated unequivocally: "There is no doubt that if there is a weed in our midst, we will uproot it."

It should be noted that the state control bodies were an integral element of the political and economic system that had established itself in the USSR, which was distinguished by the total influence of ideology on all aspects of the country's life and distorted principles of "socialist management". And therefore they carried all the flawed features of the system as a whole with its extravagance, inefficiency, emphasis not on economic laws and incentives, but on administrative pressure. But with all the reservations, they also performed functions that were objectively useful for society, since no society, be it totalitarian or democratic, can do without one form or another of control over production and distribution.

In December 1946, in a note addressed to Deputy Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the USSR Beria and Secretary of the Central Committee Kuznetsov, Mekhlis reported on gross distortions in the procedure for issuing ration cards to the population. The draft government decrees presented to him included proposals: to eliminate multiple

'RGASPI, f. 386, op. 2, d. 6, l. 2506.

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the availability of cards and coupons, to reduce the number of categories and types of basic and additional supplies, to reduce the categories of employees who are equated with workers in the supply of bread, to instruct a special commission to study the issue of streamlining the supply of leading Soviet party workers in the field.

A lot of abuses were committed when posting and using various material assets taken by the Soviet Union as trophies. This was also confirmed by an audit conducted by the Ministry of State Control in November 1946 in the Committee for Arts under the Council of Ministers of the USSR. Back in July, the Council of Ministers obliged the chairman of the committee, M.B. Khrapchenko, within a month, make an inventory of all received trophy property, first of all, art objects. However, as state controllers established, this work, contrary to Khrapchenko's report to the government, was not completed by November either. Huge valuables - paintings, jewelry, old books, antique furniture - were loaded in Germany and Hungary "in bulk", without inspection and inventory, were stolen on the way and upon arrival in Moscow. Mekhlis cited a glaring fact: out of 16 echelons of trophy property that arrived by August 1 at the address of the Committee for the Arts, seven did not have any accompanying documents.

In the capital, valuable property was distributed at the personal discretion of the authorities. At the direction of Khrapchenko, more than 30 pianos were given to persons who had nothing to do with musical institutions - Minister of Higher Education S.V. Kaftanov, Minister of Material Reserves M.V. Danchenko, Head of the Press Department of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks A.M. Egolin and others. Informing the Deputy Chairman of the Council of Ministers about this, the Minister of State Control asked

consider the issue at a government meeting. Although, perhaps, for such facts of corruption and prosecution would not be excessive.

Very tempting for a large number of officials was the exchange of banknotes, which was announced on the night of December 15, 1947. On December 30, Lev Zakharovich reported to the Deputy Chairman of the Council of Ministers, Molotov, and — in a copy — to the Secretary of the Central Committee, Zhdanov, about the massive violations of the established order that had been committed everywhere — in Tashkent and Minsk, Moscow and Riga, Kiev and Baku. Under the terms of the reform, banknotes in

public sector exchanged | to |, and personal funds of citizens - in the ratio of 10 to 1; deposits in savings banks in the amount of up to 3 thousand rubles - in proportion to | to 1, and above - 10 to 1. State controllers revealed various tricks used by violators: along with the proceeds of stores, trading bases, money from individuals was handed over, retroactively deposited money on existing deposits and on newly opened, already existing deposits were split, savings banks and pay-off points serviced "their own" even after the end of the working day, and so on.

Among those who went on a gross violation of the government's decree were the Chairman of the Council of Ministers of Moldova G.Ya. Rud, a group of party, Soviet and administrative workers of Leningrad and the Leningrad region, and many other officials. Mekhlis made a proposal to instruct the Ministry of Finance to verify the legality of all financial transactions carried out on December 14 and 15, 1947, using its own control apparatus.

An independent direction in the activities of Lev Zakharovich was the work to reduce the staff of the administrative apparatus of ministries and departments, which by the middle of 1946, according to the most conservative estimates, amounted to more than 9.5 million people. The continuous growth in the number of managers was one of the most visible manifestations of the crisis of the Stalinist model of the state, acting as the reverse side of the reduced to a minimum the scope of economic laws and incentives for high-quality, productive work. It is no coincidence that managers at all levels tried to solve problems with the provision of equipment, raw materials, labor, accounting for labor costs, the wage fund, with savings and ensuring the safety of existing material assets, etc. by expanding the circle of managers, all kinds of controllers, accountants, suppliers.

The top leadership of the country was concerned about this phenomenon, but within the framework of the established economic order, they could only resort to administrative levers. On August 13, 1946, a resolution of the Council of Ministers of the USSR "On the prohibition of the expansion of the staff of the administrative and managerial apparatus of the Soviet, state, economic, cooperative

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and public organizations", which introduced such a ban as early as August 15.

In turn, on August 19, Mekhlis instructed the ministers of state control of the Union republics and the chief inspectors to conduct a broad inspection on the ground. How is this regulation being implemented? At the same time, he organized checks directly in Moscow, in the central offices of ministries and departments. They showed that many leaders, violating a direct ban, took full advantage of the only day at their disposal, August 14th. Issuing orders retroactively, they enrolled in vacant positions or transferred from low-paid positions to higher-paid positions a lot of random, unskilled people, their relatives, etc. In a review note addressed to the Deputy Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the USSR N.A. Voznesensky was reported on the discovery of gross violations in 43 ministries and 60 enterprises.

Hidden resistance was also met by attempts by the Council of Ministers to move from a ban on the expansion of staff to their reduction. As Mekhlis reported to Stalin on January 9, 1947, in the Ministry of the Armed Forces of the USSR, the staffs were utterly inflated and exceeded 30 thousand people, and without



accounting for employees of numerous research institutes, the Central House of the Soviet Army, the Red Banner Song and Dance Ensemble and other similar structures. This was especially evident against the background of the number of all other ministries and departments of the country, as well as in comparison with the pre-war headcount of the central apparatus of the People's Commissariat of Defense of 13.5 thousand people. His former colleagues also got it from Mekhlis: he drew special attention of the addressee to the bloated staff of political agencies.

Apparently, the leadership of the MVS in every possible way delayed the solution of the problem and did not want to voluntarily lose excess fat. On this occasion, the proposals of the Minister of State Control were of a radical nature: "It seems to me that the central apparatus of the MVS ... can be reduced by 10,000 people in the near future"? Note that the leadership of the military department in an attempt to preserve the former states was not original. The Minister of State Control had to

' GARF, f. 8300, op. 1, d. 109, l. 369. 2 APRF, f. 3, op. 50, d. 4, l. 49-51.

face massive, albeit invisible, sabotage of the implementation of government decisions in other ministries and departments.

As before the war, Lev Zakharovich perceived as a very important mission (with the approval and encouragement of Stalin) and performed the function of a kind of club of the leader, which fell upon the highest administrative elite. He emphasized his closeness to the owner even by his manner of behavior among top managers. Former Minister of the Navy of the USSR A.A. Afanasiev shared with the author: "The leaders invited to the meeting with Stalin were waiting in the reception room. They usually behaved in a comradely manner, as an equal with an equal. And such a person as Vakhrushev, the Minister of the Coal Industry, will certainly shake hands with everyone and tell more than one joke to the laughter of those around him. But not everyone behaved this way. Mekhlis, for example, made no secret of the fact that he enjoyed Stalin's special favor. He did not even wait for an invitation to go into the meeting room, but simply silently crossed the reception room and hid behind the door.

A trifle? How to look. Among the leaders who surrounded the leader, such details, which meant nothing to ordinary people, sometimes turned out to be very significant. Lev Zakharovich, as before, praised Stalin, and it is noticeable that he did this not only because of the Caesarist tradition established in the country, but also out of conviction in the true greatness of the leader, rapturously. Here is just one of the examples of inspiration witnessed by the participants in the meeting at the Ministry of State Control in 1947: proclaiming a toast in honor of Stalin, their leader did not spare the epithets - "national hero, our captain, our guiding star, our friend, teacher and father."

Even senior managers were not jokingly afraid of the "Lion" in the guise of the Minister of State Control. He was a real thunderstorm, especially for executives who love out of order the comfort and entertainment. There were legends about him in Moscow. A seemingly small, but very expressive episode on this occasion was brought to the author by the above-mentioned Alexander Aleksandrovich Afanasyev: floor. I had to go there more than once, and the elevator operator, usually without asking, lifted right there. Once upon my question, where did he come from

I don't know which floor I need with my companions, the elevator operator calmly replied:

"Whoever is wearing hats, I always raise them to the state control, to Mekhlis for reprisal."

Deal, thought Alexander Alexandrovich, of course, not in hats alone. Indeed, it was difficult to confuse the person who was to be "punished" by the Minister of State Control with an ordinary visitor. After all, a call to him "on the carpet" could easily end with the poor fellow going to "drink tea" with V.S. Abakumov, who replaced Beria as Minister of State Security.

Afanasyev also spoke about the conversation he had with the famous polar explorer E.F. Fedorov. Togo in 1947 was removed from the post of head of the country's Hydrometeorological Service. In connection with what? Answering this question, Fedorov literally said the following: "Mekhlis fabricated a case,

which is not worth a damn. He piled up such nonsense for which my deputy even paid with his life. I heard the doorbell ring at night, I was afraid of arrest, of the torture that usually follows an arrest, and put a bullet in my forehead.

But, it must be admitted, often state controllers hit the target. Here are just a few facts of this kind. In September 1946, Mekhlis reported "upstairs" about the abuse of office by the Deputy Minister of Labor Resources of the USSR P.G. Moskatova and G.I. Zelenko, who spent more than 80,000 rubles of state funds in the construction of their own dachas and used the free labor of students of vocational schools.

The construction of personal dachas has also become a temptation for some leaders of the Ministry of the Armed Forces. The state controllers revealed, and Mekhlis made a presentation to the head of the Logistics of the Red Army, Khrulev, regarding the abuses of Rear Admiral I.D. Papanin (the amount of state funds spent on his country house amounted to about 250 thousand rubles, not counting the cost of transporting building materials and labor) and Marshal of the Signal Corps I.T. Peresypkin (more than 330 thousand rubles).

In the Ministry of Construction of Fuel Enterprises of the USSR, with the approval of Minister A.N. Zademidko, his deputy T.T. Litvinov allowed to spend on the equipment of offices for management

more | million rubles.

Minister of the Coal Industry of the Western Regions of the USSR

D.G. Onika grossly violated the decree of the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR of January 2, 1945, which prohibited the spending of public funds on banquets. A meeting with the leaders of Donbas production in May 1946 with his participation was accompanied by several banquets, for which more than 350 thousand rubles were spent at the expense of coal plants.

On January 11, 1947, Mekhlis reported to Stalin about the waste that had been committed in two allied ministries at once - the food industry and transport engineering. In the first of them, Minister V.P. Zotov allowed to keep a stable in the Glavsahara system. Equestrian sports hobbies of the leadership of the ministry only for less than two years cost 754 thousand rubles.

The Minister of Transport Engineering of the USSR V.A. Malyshev. As the state controllers established, he willingly gave permission for arranging banquets with booze. State funds spent for these purposes in just six months amounted to more than 1.8 million rubles. The minister also showed mercenary nepotism. At the Kirov factory in Chelyabinsk, his brother labored as an artist, from whom the ministry bought paintings worth 86,000 rubles.

The Council of Ministers of the USSR and its chairman reacted to the signals of Mekhlis. Zademidko and Moskatov were severely reprimanded by the Bureau of the Council of Ministers, and Onika was reprimanded. Zelenko and Litvinov were removed from their posts. For lovers of entertainment at public expense were produced cash receipts.

Mekhlis constantly demanded from his subordinates to increase the punishment of the guilty. In just a year and a half (1947 and the first half of 1948), about 10 million rubles were recovered to the state revenue - this was the identified damage caused as a result of overspending of the wage fund, illegal remuneration, arrangement of evenings at state expense and banquets and other excesses. This was 2 times the amount of cash receipts (4.95 million rubles) made by state control bodies for 1945 and the first half of 1946.

But again, the double standard with which the country's leadership approached the assessment of illegal actions is striking.

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representatives of the administrative elite, on the one hand, and ordinary citizens, on the other. In essence, the reaction of the head of government, his deputies, the minister of state control to the facts of corruption and embezzlement in the highest echelons was sluggish. This is all the more noticeable against the background of the repressions that fell upon representatives of the same elite in those years, but dictated by political motives (the so-called "Aviation Industry Case", "Leningrad Case").

Lev Zakharovich himself, according to numerous testimonies, was not infected with greed, he did not go beyond the privileges established for the heads of ministries. But he lived, like many other leaders, by the standards of double morality. He was guided by them not only in official, but also in personal affairs. A tough lawyer for others, he often allowed himself a discount when it came to himself.

In January 1947, in order to get to the famous Czech resort of Karlsbad (Karlovy Vary), he happened to fly to Berlin. At the airport, border guards suddenly intervened in the calm course of events. Since the vacationer did not have a foreign passport or at least a one-time pass to cross the border, the flight was delayed. It is impossible to imagine that the Minister of State Control would not be given a passport in advance. It turns out that he didn't even think of stocking up on documents in time, it didn't seem to occur to him that Poland, East Germany, Czechoslovakia, even though Soviet troops were stationed there, were still foreign countries, where a special order was established for travel. How did Mehlis do it? "The border guards did not give permission," he told his wife. "Then the pilots took off without permission." I would like to see those pilots who dared to be self-willed, having such an all-powerful passenger on board. It is clear that it was not possible to give up on the established order without his direct command. The notorious principle triumphed: what is due to Jupiter is not allowed to the bull.

Mehlis is comfortably located in the resort, by the way, so popular with the pre-revolutionary Russian nobility. Walking along the shady alleys of Karlsbad, trampled down by princes and counts, did he recall his old shy maxims about the "lordly atmosphere" in Serebryany Bor and Maryino, in which he first found himself a quarter of a century ago? Now he firmly felt himself in the environment.

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#### RULE: DO NOT TOUCH THE ELITE YOURSELF

Understanding well to whom he owes everything, Lev Zakharovich regularly served as the "Stalinist ax" (let us recall the expression of Simonov), worked, as in past years, a lot, one might say, selflessly. So much so that even he himself once could not stand it, he complained about the weak help of his subordinates: "There is no need to create a center and write to Mehlis, Mehlis, Mehlis ... regardless of the fact that I work from dawn to dusk and have 15-20 minutes in day for a break. With such an attitude to the matter, he seemed to be able to count on the leader's full disposition. All the more unexpected, as far as one can judge from the documents, was the resonance of the state comprehensive audit of the financial and economic activities of the Council of Ministers of the Azerbaijan SSR carried out in the spring-summer of 1948 for him.

From the very beginning, it was conceived on a grand scale, although later, in hindsight, the Minister of State Control tried to accuse his subordinates of having, allegedly contrary to his instructions, gone beyond the strictly prescribed framework "to conduct an audit quietly, to conduct modestly, not create hype, neither directly nor indirectly allow verification of party workers and party organs.

Extensive and, I must say, very thorough preparation for the state audit refutes the reproaches of Mekhlis. Of course, the consolidated plan did not provide for checking cases in the party organs. But everything that was within the competence of the state control bodies, contained. And, approved by the minister, it was not oriented at all to the fact that the audit should be "conducted quietly, conducted modestly". On the contrary, the demand for "modesty", some kind of locality, would be at least strange,

since this state audit was carried out in accordance with a direct decree of the Council of Ministers of the USSR.

The government order was considered by the board of the Moscow City Committee the very next day. She determined the terms of the audit - from May 23 to June 20, appointed the persons who were entrusted with its implementation, headed by Deputy Minister S.G. Emelyanov, approved the main issues. Their detailed list barely fit into

RGASPI, f. 386, op. 2, d. 7, l. 22.

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25 pages of the plan and covered: the budget of the republic and the construction complex, health care and social security, trade and cooperation, supply and marketing. It was especially planned to check the administration of the Council of Ministers of Azerbaijan, deal with the numerous complaints of the workers. Ten brigades were formed, with the leaders of which, on the eve of leaving for Baku, Yemelyanov conducted a detailed briefing. Each of the brigades, in turn, received a program of action approved by the leadership. So, there can be no question of any impulsiveness of actions, giving some excessive scope already in the course of the audit, moreover, on the initiative of the auditors themselves.

Yes, and Mehliis himself at first did not see any reason for concern. Yemelyanov kept in touch with Moscow, reporting on revisions and inspections completed by one or another brigade. And, judging by the minister's resolutions, he took these reports as he should. So, on the report “On mass registration of tractor work in the Ali-Bayramli MTS of the AzSSR”, on June 18, he made a note: “Comrade. Emelyanov. I believe that the issue should be resolved in the Council of Ministers of the Republic on your proposal. The MTS director and the agronomist should be brought to justice. The same former chief accountant. Following the instructions of the chief, Yemelyanov presented the act of auditing the MTS to the Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Republic T.I. Guliyev, according to which the government of Azerbaijan punished those guilty of postscripts, about which Mekhlis was immediately informed.

The Minister also approved other reports on the measures taken to deal with major violations of state discipline in the state farms and wineries of Azsovkhoztrest, the facts of overspending wages and vicious planning practices in the Ministry of Taste Industry of the Republic, and others.

However, the deeper and more extensive the checks on specific issues became, the clearer the picture of massive abuses and crimes on the part of managers at all levels became. Of course, it was not the desire to “undermine the authority” of the party leadership, which the controllers were later accused of, that moved them: the very course of the revision dragged out, forced, having touched the tip of the “iceberg”, to dig deeper and deeper. They, one might say, became victims of their own conscientiousness.

Moreover, there was where to turn around. Representatives of state control revealed numerous facts of illegal supply of food products through commission shops to the inhabitants of government dachas, providing managers with industrial goods on special warrants. They discovered that, under the sign of the state dacha, there is a personal dacha of the chairman of the Council of Ministers Kuliiev, under which 8 hectares of land were alienated from the local collective farm - a luxurious two-story palace with a huge subsidiary farm. The smaller leaders, of course, could not keep up with the top officials. Although, as the auditors from Moscow established, they did not offend themselves either. For example, the estimated cost of the dacha of the manager of the trust “Azneftehsnab” A.Z. Zimanov amounted to more than 20 thousand rubles. |

The omnipotence and luxurious lifestyle of the local elite, flourishing bribery and nepotism so outraged the population that in a few days up to 2 thousand people signed up for an appointment with Yemelyanov, almost | a thousand written complaints.

It was here that the local leaders, who willingly passed resolutions on the punishment of those guilty of underwriting several tens of hectares of arable land or squandering a hundred or two liters of fuel, already felt the danger to themselves and sounded the alarm. The party elite launched frank demagoguery: the first secretary of the Central Committee of the CP(b) of Azerbaijan, M.-D.A. Bagirov sent a telegram to Stalin complaining that the auditors were "discrediting" the leadership of the republic.

Apparently, Mir-Jafar Abbasovich suspected that the audit was the result of Kremlin intrigues on the part of those who would like to "sit him out". Deputy Head of the International Department of the Central Committee of the CPSU in the 70-80s K.N. Brutents, who worked in the Baku city committee in 1948, recalled rumors of this kind, and also that the Moscow commission had accumulated enough facts "that could put our first in a difficult position."

But Bagirov managed to compromise Yemelyanov. He went to Kislovodsk for a few days to "ventilate", thinking that there would be beyond the reach of the first secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Azerbaijan-

' GARF, f. 8300, op. 1, d. 269, l. 109.

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jana. But Mir-Jafar, who in the 1920s and 1930s was the chairman of the Azerbaijani GPU and People's Commissar of Internal Affairs, had friends everywhere in the security agencies. They fabricated photographs discrediting Yemelyanov, which were sent to Stalin. "And the commission, together with its conclusions, fell asleep".

In 1956, Bagirov, who was declared an accomplice of Beria, was shot by the Military Collegium of the Supreme Court of the USSR. But then, in 1948, the Azerbaijani leaders found full support in Moscow. By decision of the Politburo of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks, a special commission headed by Malenkov was created. The resolutions of the Central Committee of the Party, adopted on July 30 and August 26, 1948, based on the results of its work, pointed to the violation of the "Bolshevik principle of personnel selection", as a result of which a group of workers turned out to be in the apparatus of the Moscow City Committee of the USSR, politically and business-wise unsuitable for work. in state control", "perversion of the concept of independence of controllers in work", arrogance, separation from local party and Soviet bodies. The direct participants in the audit in Azerbaijan, primarily Deputy Minister Yemelyanov, were accused by the Central Committee of tendentiousness, deliberate distrust of the leaders of the republic, and the use of "politically harmful" methods. Yemelyanov was dismissed from his post by a decree of the Council of Ministers of the USSR (he was generally forbidden to continue working in state control bodies), M.I. was also relieved of his duties as deputy minister. Starostin.

Mekhlis was also hit: he was accused of incorrectly reacting to the signals of the Azerbaijani leaders, misleading the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks. Speaking to his subordinates outlining the decisions of the Central Committee, he was forced to repent of the mistakes "made by me personally as a minister." He accused his former deputy and other participants in the audit in Azerbaijan of ignoring the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the republic, arrogance, inclination to "arapists", speculative accusations, tendentiousness, and even having connections with "dubious women". "We have carried out clearly insufficient work in removing from the Moscow City Conservatory of the USSR those who are unsuitable for control work," he finished threateningly. And all this

' Brutents K.N. Thirty years on the Old Square. M., 1998. S. 82. 2 RGASPI, f. 386, op. 2, d. 7. l. 40.

under the refrain of incantations about the need to develop criticism in the department, and audits and checks should be carried out "in the spirit of party spirit, principles and truthfulness", that "the interests of the state are above all for the supervisory staff". It is unfortunate that the minister showed a "double" standard in understanding these categories.

However, here he followed the top leadership of the country. After all, behind the accusations against state controllers, as if they had taken on an unusual function of checking

party workers and party bodies, there was dissatisfaction with something completely different - that the controllers, albeit unwittingly, drew public attention to the greed and the very real moral decay of the party-soviet-economic elite of Azerbaijan. And this created a precedent dangerous for the political elite of the whole country.

The decisions of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks, in full accordance with the long-standing political tradition, were followed by the documents of the Soviet government - the resolution of the Council of Ministers of the USSR "On clarifying the rights of the Ministry of State Control of the USSR and its representatives in the field" (August 26, 1948) and the corresponding decree Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR. The rights of state controllers, assigned to them since the formation of the people's commissariat in 1940, were significantly curtailed. From now on, all the results of audits and inspections had to be reported to the government in advance. Removal from office and bringing the perpetrators to justice, which previously fell within the competence of the Minister of State Control, could now be carried out only with the permission of the Council of Ministers of the USSR, and the imposition of disciplinary sanctions required the consent of one of the members of the Bureau (deputy chairmen) of the Council of Ministries. str. It was also forbidden to audit ministries, main departments and committees under the governments of the USSR and the Union republics, as well as the executive committees of regional, regional councils in general, it was allowed to audit the activities of only their structural divisions.

The blow to the pride of Mehliş was, of course, painful. But he reacted to the decision of higher authorities unquestioningly and without delay. Already on August 2, the collegium of the Moscow City Committee of the USSR heard him

' GARF, f. 8300, op. 1, d. 212, l. 7-8.

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a report on the essence of the decisions of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks (in August, especially in the second half of it, the collegium of the ministry was held literally every other day). On August 3, the party and economic activists of the ministry passed with the same agenda. On August 23-27, a meeting was held in Moscow with the ministers of state control of the union republics. In the first ten days of September, meetings were held locally — directly in the Ministries of State Control of all Union Republics.

Frames have been thoroughly cleaned. From July 1948 to January 1949, 47 people were expelled from the central office, and 99 people from the MGK of the Union republics.

Attention is drawn to the inconsistency of a number of requirements Mekhlis to his subordinates. Thus, in the most categorical way, he forbade including in the audit reports the names of officials of higher organizations, whose activities were not directly checked. Officially, this was justified by the need to protect the leading cadres from "defamation". In practice, checks and revisions in this case resulted in the search for the notorious switchmen - grassroots workers, who, as the same state audit in Azerbaijan showed, were often forced to violate the law at the request of "above". Is it necessary to prove that if the supervisory staff complied with this requirement, "steam went off the whistle": artificially driving checks and revisions into a kind of Procrustean bed, cutting off, for formal reasons, the criminal threads that connected lawbreakers at the object being checked with their accomplices and patrons? , the sentinels objectively could not reveal the true extent of abuses and theft, did not get to the bottom of their roots, did not have the opportunity to achieve the elimination of their causes.

Restrictions imposed on the scope of activities of the state controllers by the decision-making bodies and their own minister - the conclusions on each audit and check must be preliminarily agreed "at the top", in no case cover the ministries, central administrations as a whole, to exclude mentioning in the acts of any names of the leaders, even if they were related to the revealed abuses, but were not directly subjected to verification or revision in this particular case - they gave scope to parochialism, arbitrariness of the authorities and, in fact, liquidated

They gave the main advantage of state controllers over departmental control, namely, independence from local authorities and heads of ministries and departments, defending national interests.

Lev Zakharovich tied the hands of his subordinates, but he also felt serious limitations on himself. If earlier with the powers given to him, he really was elevated above the heads of other ministries and central departments, could by his power bring to responsibility the absolute majority of officials, up to the union minister, now he was forced to seek permission from the Council of Ministers of the USSR even for punishment. foreman of a fishing collective farm or accountant of an artel of the disabled.

All this had an immediate impact on the effectiveness of the CIM's actions. If the subject of constant concerns of the post-war years, but at the same time the legitimate pride of Mekhlis, was the purposeful enlargement of the scale of audits and inspections, their concentration on the most important, key sectors of the economy, then after August 1948, the overwhelming majority of objects under audit were no longer industries, not central offices, not groups of the same type of production in several regions at the same time, but individual factories, collective farms, elevators, railway sections, shipyards. Accordingly, the conclusions of the controllers concerned the issues private, largely atypical.

The installations given by Mekhlis to subordinates became diametrically opposed. He, who had previously reproached the inspectors for their pettiness, lack of wings, and narrowness of checks, now blamed them for striving for "problematic issues." At a board meeting on December 14, 1948, the minister bluntly stated: "There is a danger, I conclude this on a number of materials, instead of raising the question of this plant, according to 2-3 plants separately or together, an attempt to achieve the formulation of problematic issues in such a way that how, once you go to the government, then there must be a problematic issue. This is wrong... Now we have to go to the government with every issue."

In practice, such contradictory, disorienting attitudes quite naturally turned into a more frequent return from

GARF, f. 8300, op. 1, d. 232, l. 105.

Council of Ministers of the materials submitted there on private violations and abuses, a decline in the activity of the supervisory staff, which the minister himself was later forced to admit.

All the main subdivisions of the CIM—grain, cotton, railway, and military control—worked on a lesser scale and more effectively. In figures, this decline looked as follows: in September 1948-January 1949, the number of final reports to the government decreased by almost 1.5 times compared to January-August 1948 (respectively 165 and 235), almost 3 times - due to data on their basis of resolutions of the Council of Ministers of the USSR (38 and 103), more than 7 times - the number of orders of the minister to impose penalties on the guilty (130 and 926) '.

Thus, the cause of supra-departmental control exercised on behalf of the state authorities (with all its shortcomings and weaknesses) suffered significant damage. The party elite, protecting their narrowly selfish interests, preserving the right to impunity in the disposal of national wealth, sacrificed the already meager capabilities of the Ministry of State Control.

The archival materials at our disposal, however, do not contain a single fact of Mekhlis's disagreement with such a course, although he could not but understand its harm to the cause. In response to accusations from the Central Committee of unplanned work, the board of the Moscow City Committee of the USSR, on the initiative of the minister, already in August decided to immediately draw up a plan for 1949. Lev Zakharovich demanded that, at the same time, the greatest attention be paid to reducing the number of objects planned for audits, to work dynamically, not dragging out "ungodly" deadlines, and to outline such issues on which government decisions should be expected.

The next "bottleneck" that the Moscow City Committee of the USSR tried to "expand" was the timing of the implementation of audit and inspection materials. If before August 1948 only 76 percent of the materials could be translated into government resolutions and orders of the minister within 20 to 50 days, then, starting from September, all materials without exception were such. Mekhlis roughly punished the red tape in the person of the chief inspector of the State Control on the

| GARF, f. 8300, op. 2, d. 320, l. 40.

railway transport A.D. Gushchin and Deputy Minister E.V. Anisimov. Due to the fault of the first, a report to the government on the results of one of the checks was being prepared for more than three months, but Anisimov did not take timely measures to stop the red tape. The minister, by order of January 28, 1949, punished both, demanding that they restore proper order, and report immediately on all cases of violation of the established deadlines for preparing materials for their implementation. These measures, however, did not have much resonance, since the process of limiting the powers of the USSR CIM continued to maintain momentum.

It is noteworthy that the Council of Ministers of the USSR and its leader Stalin repeatedly criticized the Ministry of State Control even after it successfully reported on the implementation of the resolutions of the Central Committee and the Council of Ministers adopted in the summer of 1948. So, in February 1949, noting the shortage of large batches of raw cotton at cotton factories and procurement points, the USSR Council of Ministers made big claims to the inspectors and ordered Mekhlis to take measures to radically correct the situation.

In order to bring down the critical wave, Lev Zakharovich, who had studied the laws of apparatus struggle well for three decades, tried to take advantage of a suitable occasion - the 30th anniversary of socialist state control, which was being celebrated in April 1949. He did not miss the opportunity to remind the country that Stalin himself stood at the origins of the ministry, which is now entrusted to him. We believe that this was an attempt not only to hide in the shadow of the leader, but also to publicly express his complete loyalty to him, counting on the return of his former goodwill.

"With renewed vigor," Mekhlis wrote in Pravda on April 9, 1949, "the questions raised by Comrade Stalin about the need to save the people's penny for the further growth of the economy, to implement a brutal regime of economy, to eradicate all and all excesses, lawlessness and embezzlement of public funds and material assets.

The same thoughts were voiced from his lips on the same day at the solemn meeting of the staff of the Moscow City Conservatory of the USSR. It is characteristic that this was not the usual speech on the occasion of the anniversary with a report on the achievements

' GARF, f. 8300, op. 1, d. 356, l. 19, 25.

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chickpeas and listing the names of those who distinguished themselves. Lev Zakharovich, taking into account, obviously, recent serious claims from the Central Committee, did not speak about successes at all. Turning to history and defining the stages of the formation of socialist state control, he especially focused on the role of Stalin in this process, repeatedly quoted him, interspersed his speech with praises and toasts addressed to the leader, like this: "Glory, glory, eternal glory to the greatest commander, wise and far-sighted leader, Generalissimo Stalin, under whose leadership a world-historic victory was won!

Judging by subsequent events, Mekhlis's line of conduct was chosen correctly. He managed to turn the tide and regain confidence in himself and his department. In addition, as evidenced by the available archival documents, the decision-making bodies themselves, after some time, realized the haste to deprive the USSR Ministry of State Control of its former powers and, if not completely, restored the status quo.

In May 1949, the Moscow City Committee of the USSR checked the correctness of the write-off of material assets on seven railways of the country, which showed that the corresponding decision of the government



The regulations on the annual inventory in railway transport were grossly violated, while the inventory was used as a screen for writing off and hiding shortages of equipment, machinery and materiel.

In June of the same year, in accordance with the instructions of the government in 35 regions, territories and republics, the implementation of the plan for the capital construction and repair of warehouses and elevators for the acceptance of a new crop was checked. The revealed picture demanded prompt action: on 1 June, out of 16 elevators, only one went into operation, the overhaul plan was completed by only 51.5 percent. Losses amounted to tens of millions of rubles.

Several checks and revisions concerned the production and preservation of alcohol. The fact of artificial overestimation of the planned cost of production in the Glavspirt system of the Ministry of the Food Industry of the USSR was established, due to which the commander-in-chief illegally received a subsidy in the amount of 81.6 million rubles. Mass postscripts were also identified when checking subordinate

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Glavspirt Ulyanovsk trust. The significance of the results obtained by Mekhlis's subordinates during these inspections is evidenced by the fact that they served as an incentive for the country's government to decide on the creation of the State Control over the safety and consumption of alcohol in the structure of the Moscow City Conservatory of the USSR in July 1949.

By this time, Mekhlis had been at the helm of the State Control for about nine years. He was a prominent representative of the type of leaders who are usually called Stalin's people's commissars. Under his leadership, the State Audit Office became the most important element of command and control systems.

## ALONE WITH MYSELF

The year 1949 turned out to be a turning point in the life of Lev Zakharovich, which made it possible to experience both the rise and collapse of hopes. In January, he received congratulations on his 60th birthday. Congratulations flowed to the ministry, to the home address. A respectful telegram came from Dnepropetrovsk from the Brezhnevs (the future general secretary of the Central Committee of the CPSU, and then the first secretary of the Dnepropetrovsk regional committee, was subordinate to Mekhlis at the front, as the head of the political department of the 18th Army, which was part of the 4th Ukrainian Front) . From Berlin - from Marshal V.D. Sokolovsky, from Kamenetz-Podolsky - from the local authorities as a deputy elected in their constituency. The family of the poet Alexander Bezymensky congratulated the "good friend, beloved comrade, excellent Bolshevik". The songwriters brothers Pokrass did not stand aside.

Clement Efremovich Voroshilov, who wrote: "Dear Lev Zakharovich! I allow myself (belatedly, unfortunately) to greet you and congratulate you on the heroic deed of your sixty-year stay on one of the planets of our solar system. I wish you long and just as successful success in your future work and a mobile, prosperous (? - Yu.R.) Bolshevik health. I shake my hand hard."

' GARF, f. 8300, op. 1, d. 368, l. 127-128, 259, 319-320, 351-352.

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Congratulations also came from ordinary people. We delivered a letter from the senior supervisor of the Noginlag of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the USSR A.A. Shishulin with congratulations and gratitude for the help in establishing a pension for an orphan who was brought up in his family. The former Red Army soldier of the 46th Rifle Division during the Civil War L. Fraiman, the Alkhimov family from the Voronezh region, in whose house the hero of the day lived for some time in 1942, then a member of the Military Council of the 6th Army, reminded of themselves. But a group of old Bolsheviks, behind congratulations, could not hide their offense: according to

new pension legislation, they were deprived of the benefits that were enshrined in 1930. Please don't let this happen, pleaded party members with pre-revolutionary experience. When you were younger and healthier, you needed them, but now...

On the occasion of his jubilee, Lev Zakharovich was awarded the Order of Lenin. And three months later he attached another order with the same profile to his paramilitary jacket. Now in connection with the anniversary of his department.

And in the same 1949, events took place that put an end to the political career of our hero. In the summer, chest pains began to bother me. It was new and unpleasant. I went to rest in Barvikha, and then along the familiar route to Miskhor. I swam a lot, walked in the mountains, rode a boat, fished - and the malaise receded. But, as it turned out, not for long and in order to hit even harder in winter. On December 4, he was struck by a stroke: his right leg and arm were paralyzed, his speech was disturbed. The stroke was followed by a heart attack. Mekhlis was again in Barvikha.

Recovery was difficult and slow. Lev Zakharovich, perhaps for the first time in his life, had so much free time to reflect on what he had gone through and experienced. He could not help but wonder why the former closeness with Stalin began to noticeably weaken, which was the reason for the sharp criticism of his department, starting in 1948. More and more often the thought came, which he drove away from himself, but it kept coming back and hurting the soul, so devoted to the leader ...

Let us interrupt the narrative to dwell on a question that was shyly avoided in our literature before, but which in real politics under Stalin, and even later, played a significant role. We are talking about clear anti-Semitism, which was professed by most of the ruling elite, including the leader (nali

which individual Jews like Kaganovich or Mekhlis did not fundamentally change the picture).

That Stalin is an anti-Semite is confirmed by the observations of many of his contemporaries in a wide time range from the 20s (Boris Bazhanov) to the 50s (Konstantin Simonov). Some of today's authors even elevate this quality of a leader to an undoubted merit, for example, Vladimir Karpov in *The Generalissimo*.

Anti-Semitism was also dictated by the real politics of late Stalinism, suffice it to recall the campaign against the "rootless cosmopolitans", the case of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee, the "cause of doctors". In the first post-war years, the anti-Jewish purge of the state apparatus, the sphere of production, science and culture, ideologically prepared in the second half of the 1930s and gradually begun during the Great Patriotic War, began to noticeably grow in breadth and become tougher in nature. Even the highest Jewish nomenklatura was involved in its sphere.

There is reason to believe that Lev Zakharovich was not spared this cup either, though not openly, not in the sharpest form. Yes, he did not die "accidentally" under the wheels of a car, like the people's artist Solomon Mikhoels. He was not shot, like Solomon Lozovsky, the former Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs. He did not end up in prison on absurd accusations, like Academician Lina Stern. But there is a certain connection between Mekhlis' illness and his forced departure from the political elite, on the one hand, and the anti-Semitic campaign, on the other. This point of view is shared, for example, by the historian G.V. Kostyrchenko'.

Lev Zakharovich worked for thirty years next to the "father of peoples." It is doubtful that even with all the cruelty, extreme dryness and callousness, he managed to perceive Stalin's anti-Semitism with indifference. And yet there is not a single piece of evidence that he even once raised his voice against the persecution of his siblings. |

His line of conduct since the 1920s, according to the testimony of Boris Bazhanov already known to the reader, was reduced to a simple formula: "I am not a Jew, I am a communist." That's right, literally

! Kostyrchenko G.V. Stalin's secret policy. Power and anti-Semitism.

M., 2003. S. 516.

Lev Zakharovich commented on Stalin's anti-Semitic attack, which the General Secretary's assistants unwittingly witnessed. "This is a convenient position," Bazhanov summed up. "She will allow Mekhlis to be a loyal and devoted Stalinist until the end of his days, and to render irreplaceable services to Stalin!"

He worked out his master's trust as best he could. While studying at the Institute of Red Professors, he smashed the Trotskyists and Bukharinites with the characteristic surnames Aikhenwald, Elvov, Tsetlin, Deborin (Joffe). While working in Pravda, he fearlessly put everyone beyond the editorial threshold who, in the figurative expression of the cartoonist Boris Efimov, could succinctly write in the fifth column of the questionnaire: "Yes." Being the head of the PU of the Red Army, he agreed that the percentage of repressed non-Great Russians, including Jews, should be higher than the share of their representation in the command and political composition of the army.

All this, of course, impressed the leader. Complete self-renunciation, a demonstrative renunciation of national self-identification, personal devotion to Stalin, reaching extreme limits, in the eyes of the latter redeemed a lot in the personality of Mekhlis. Including, obviously, the "uncomfortable" nationality.

Nevertheless, Lev Zakharovich sometimes felt the heavy breath of repression on his back. No one could consider himself completely safe in that pogrom situation. Some forces tried to cast a shadow on him, the leader loyal to Sancho Panza.

In the fall of 1938, the Special Department of the NKVD received a letter with a New York postmark and addressed to Mekhlis. Its content, style and spelling are worthy of being quoted in full.

"July 2nd

Dear Leva!!

Your shop on 34th Street is closed and everything is sold for next to nothing. In vain you sent the whole party at the disposal of Kogan. This batch of canvas is better than the previous one. Only it could have been better sold through Moselprom-Rabinovich.

Amtorg is only engaged in intrigues and thinks that his uncle in Moscow will be able to hide his tricks through Lazar. Just in vain-

'  
Bazhanov B. Memoirs of the former secretary of Stalin. S. 82.

but you let them all profit by risking your skin. Packages from Rosa and Moses came from San Francisco and the proceeds are credited there on the spot.

Details will be sent by mail from Washington. I am sending this letter to Kaganovich's address so that it does not fall into the clutches of your Manka.

Boris and Bronya are healthy, their son was born on June 15th. Ethel's husband died of a broken heart. Her husband's mother wants her to live with her in Chicago. We are all healthy here and dream of seeing you soon.

Forgive my daub. You know, it's hard for me to write in Russian.

Well, I kiss you, your brother Solomon.

There is no doubt that this letter, having fallen into the hands of Mekhlis, seriously alarmed him. Enemies got an excellent weapon against him for intrigue - criminal ties with foreign countries, illegal

commerce, but you never know what else. And if the owner believes in this letter, whom the "authorities" will certainly inform? No, it's better to report everything yourself and in a favorable light for yourself.

November 28, 1938 under the heading "Owls. secret. copy. No. 1" Lev Zakharovich sent this letter to Stalin with the following accompaniment: "During my business trip in July, a provocative, extravagant letter with a stamp from New York arrived at the Kremlin in my name. This letter was forwarded by the commandant's office of the Kremlin to the Political Directorate of the Red Army, and from there it was handed over to the Special Department of the NKVD in the person of its former chief Fedorov, who turned out to be an enemy of the people. Now this provocative letter, apparently concocted in the Moscow embassy circles, has been returned to PURKKA from the Special Department.

I am sending you this letter. I would think that the NKVD should start searching for the provocateurs of the letter.

As far as is known, this "cidula" had no unpleasant consequences for Lev Zakharovich. But, knowing the mores of the Kremlin court, he could hardly be calm in the future. At any moment the chief saw fit, a letter from New York would be requested. In the end, the notorious Lydia Timashuk's denunciation of her colleagues in the Kremlin hospital was also born

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Military History Journal, 1993, No. 1, p. 96.

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not in 1952, but lay in the archive for almost four years, before the state security agencies, hyping the case of "pesticians", gave it a go ...

But let's get back to the sick, out of work Lev Zakharovich. We must pay tribute to his character: he tried not to succumb to illness. When his condition stabilized, he began to learn to write with his left hand - the archive keeps several notebooks, where in scribbles his characteristic large and firm handwriting is only guessed. He used newspaper articles and a biography of Stalin as a model for writing.

There was a lot of free time - I began to read something, watch movies, and also wrote down their grades. They are valuable in their own way for characterizing the inner world of Lev Zakharovich. After watching the film "Kuban Cossacks", he considered it necessary "to congratulate the team of artists... on their outstanding success." And here are his assessments of books: "The floating village" by Vitaly Zakrutkin - "The book is read with exciting interest"; "Kochubey" by Arkady Perventsev is "a bright page in the history of the civil war"; "How the Steel Was Tempered" by Nikolai Ostrovsky — "The novel suffers from some roughness, imperfections. But they are compensated a hundredfold by revolutionary passion."

It is impossible not to pay attention to the fact that the patient's reading circle is very specific - works about the Civil War and the building of socialism, and far from the best of those given by Soviet literature. Even before, in numerous articles and speeches, he never turned to fiction, did not refer to EU images. Here in this he turned out to be completely different from Stalin.

It seems that Lev Zakharovich, although he once edited the largest newspaper in the country, "supervised" writers and journalists on duty, but never seriously got acquainted with Russian and world classics - be it literature, music, theater, did not feel the need for Pushkin, Tolstoy, Turgenev, Chekhov, and remained deaf to culture. However, in this he did not differ from the absolute majority of high-ranking Soviet officials. Despite having a doctoral degree, he was, perhaps, not sufficiently educated. Meager spiritual world, ignorance in the cult

The tour sphere contributed a lot to the development of the worst sides of his personality.

What had been lost before was no longer catching up. There was neither desire nor strength for this. Lev Zakharovich tried not to sit still, although without rest he could only take a few steps. His character became softer. It often happens, as soon as a person hears the first "bell", realizes that he is not forged from steel and is not eternal. I began to joke more often. With relatives, he often remembered which number he "soaked" while relaxing in Carlsbad: "The Czechs made up a sanatorium leaflet for me. They ask for the last name. Decided - what do they care? He called himself Ivanov, and by his patronymic Ivan Ivanovich. A little and very funny became from the joke.

The loneliness was noticeable. Illness and forced idleness exacerbated the need for human communication. However, at one time he did not make friends to his liking, excluding, perhaps, only Ortenberg. I rejoiced at his every visit to the dacha, where Lev Zakharovich was now practically without getting out, a conversation, a chess game. In letters, he shared with him his impressions of what he had read. Worried: there would be only a good harvest, "we don't care about the rest. Then the United States and all sorts of blocs are not afraid of us, let's put them on both shoulder blades. Is not it?"

Most of all, he was burdened by being excluded from political life. He had no other occupation, for many years he was accustomed to being at the center of events that determined the life of the country, to decide other people's destinies, and then suddenly he was left alone with a dangerous illness. The hopes of returning to work that did not leave him were gradually fading away. In August 1950, when the Council of Ministers of the USSR extended his medical leave for 6 months, Lev Zakharovich still hoped that his place would remain. But already in October, the Politburo of the Central Committee made the following decision: "In view of the fact that, for health reasons, comrade. Mehlis L.Z. it is difficult to fulfill the duties of the Minister of State Control - to release comrade. Mehlis L.Z. from [these] duties ... bearing in mind that after the recovery of comrade. Mehlis, he will be sent to party political work. The vacant office in the Ministry of State Control was taken over by Beria's henchman, the gloomy V.N. Merkulov.

To put up with the idea that he was now out of work was unbearable for Lev Zakharovich. The 19th Party Congress was approaching, and its forward

You haven't been elected a delegate in twenty years. Mekhlis addressed Stalin with a letter in which he asked for permission, as a member of the Central Committee, to attend the congress, at least with the right to an advisory vote. While waiting for an answer, he wrote to Ortenberg from Miskhor: "I don't ask where the congress will be, it's a secret. As for the Moscow Conference, that is another matter. When will it take place? And a detail. Are there stairs to both ends in the Hall of Columns? The detail is of interest to me."

"It was not in vain that he found this out," Ortenberg commented in an interview with the author. - Despite limited mobility, Lev Zakharovich still hoped to get Stalin's permission and be at the congress. But Stalin refused. Mehlis was terribly upset. I visited him at his dacha in Petrovo-Dalnaya and saw it with my own eyes. One day of the work of the congress passed, the second, the third ... Lev Zakharovich could not find a place for himself. I reassured him, saying that it was inconvenient to demand something in such a state: what might people think when they see a disabled person among the delegates?

The congress is over," Ortenberg continued. — We receive "Pravda" with a list of members of the Central Committee. And suddenly we read: "Mekhlis Lev Zakharovich." I tell him:

- You see, Stalin did not forget you, you were worried in vain.

He was terribly pleased."

True, this fact has changed little in everyday life. The dacha was replaced by the Kremlin clinic, the hospital ward was replaced by the number of the Kommunist sanatorium in Miskhor, which had been beloved since the 1920s. Mehlis was very worried about his son, whose mental illness progressed.

..Knowing the fate of how many people Lev Zakharovich drove like a ruthless skating rink, one involuntarily wonders if he was capable of showing affection, compassion, pity? It turns out that he is capable - to his wife and son. They were true love and pain for him.

Elizaveta Abramovna, with the outbreak of war, put on the shoulder straps of a medical officer, worked in a hospital in Moscow. When Lev Zakharovich became a member of the Military Council of the Volkhov Front, his wife came to him. To her credit, she did not cool off, but worked in her specialty in one of the hospitals. They were close for a long time, together they moved to the 4th Ukrainian Front. From there, the major of the medical service Mlynarchik You

I needed to return to Moscow - Leonid demanded increased attention.

How many hopes they placed in their time on their son! He turned out to be in poor health. And yet, Mekhlis Sr. did not seek for him a fate different from the fate of millions of his peers. He approved of Leonid's desire to study as an aeronautical engineer at the military academy. On October 4, 1941, having got to Moscow for one day, he hurried to write to his son in Engels, where the Air Force Engineering Academy was evacuated: "One of these days you will be 19 years old. Congratulations... You are nourished and nurtured by the Soviet government, by our Bolshevik Party. Learn, gain knowledge, so that you can perfectly fight against damned fascism. Kiss. Your father".

The Academy was not completed: Leonid returned to Moscow ahead of schedule due to illness. He hesitated what to do, seemed to be not averse to fighting next to his father. He strongly advised to quickly determine and go to the gunners - if flat feet were identified, it would be easier than in the infantry: "Come to Efim Afanasyevich Shchadenko - he will help."

On August 28, 1942, having received a message from his son that he was studying artillery courses, Mekhlis Sr. instructed him, referring to his experience as a scorer during the First World War. Know, they say, that a weapon is like a child, it must be groomed, protected in battle, and it is better to die next to it than to leave it to the enemy. The next letter contains a new instruction, frankly, worthy of any parent: "Love, dear son, your homeland more than your mother and father, more than life itself."

He asks Leonid to tell him when his studies are over: "I want them to fight together." Did not work out. The son, citing ill health, returned to Moscow. My father insisted: finish school, "you will go to the army and get stronger physically." In May 1943, he again encourages: "Do not forget your years - you need to get stronger and join the army, defend your homeland."

The disease, in the end, turned out to be stronger than Lev Zakharovich's desire to see his son at the front. But even now, when he himself was forced to fight the disease, it was not possible to be with Leonid all the time. When they went with Elizaveta Abramovna to Barvikha or to the south, they had to leave their son in a special room.

nick. There, at the Streshnevo hospital, he addressed letters to Mekhlis, not even being firmly convinced that the orderlies would not intercept them.

On June 1, 1951, in the Crimea, uneven lines fell on paper: "I live in the same dacha as in 1949. But how does this year, 1951, differ from 1949? I didn't care at all then, I swam in the sea, rode a boat, shot at mullet and quite successfully. And now ... I'm sitting in the room hopelessly, or rather, I'm lying more. The disease, apparently, was so exhausting that Mekhlis Sr. no longer tried, as before, to invigorate and promise his son someday to come here, to the south, together.

The state of health and mood, of course, could not but be affected by the hysteria that arose in 1952 around the doctors of the "Kremlin". This, of course, is not about "wrecking", not about the deliberate killing of high-ranking patients: the accusations of this against the doctors of the Kremlin clinic were officially dropped back in 1953. But there is no doubt that the deadly spirit of bureaucratic hierarchy, corporatism, mutual responsibility soared in the famous "Kremlin". Each of the professors of the LSUK, the Kremlin Medical and Sanitary Administration, burdened with numerous positions, simultaneously took care of dozens of high-ranking patients. As a result, treatment sometimes turned into its opposite.

As G.V. Kostyrchenko, "for example, the head of LUSK, Professor P.I. Egorov, who used G.M. Dimitrova, Marshals A.M. Vasilevsky, S.M. Shtemenko (the latter for

accuracy - he was not a marshal, but an army general. - Yu.R.), Academician S.I. Vavilov and many others, sent in the summer of 1952 the former Minister of State Control of the USSR L.Z. Mekhlis, who suffered from heart failure, for treatment in the Crimea, which was contraindicated for him!

In the winter of 1953, Mekhlis's health deteriorated markedly. He died on February 13, three weeks before Stalin's death, and they "managed" to show him the honors due to a party and statesman of his stature. The government commission for the organization of the funeral, headed by the secretary of the Central Committee of the CPSU M.A. Suslov, "representatives of the workers" at the coffin in the Hall of Columns, a funeral rally on Red Square,

! Kostyrchenko G.V. Captured by the red pharaoh. M., 1994. S. 310.

an urn with ashes immured in the Kremlin wall... If Lev Zakharovich survived the owner, it would be difficult to vouch for such honors, and more evidence of this is the almost complete posthumous oblivion of the name of Mekhlis.

The lifetime hierarchy in the party-Soviet establishment was strictly observed even after the death of those who belonged to it. Mekhlis was, moreover, a pensioner by the day of his death, and it would be foolish to expect that condolences, apart from collective condolences from the Central Committee of the CPSU, would be personally expressed by someone from the highest elite. The first persons of the country were also not at the funeral meeting. Only Suslov, Secretary of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR A.F. Gorkin, head of the Main Political Directorate of the Soviet Army and Navy, Colonel General Kuznetsov, Lev Zakharovich's reliable deputy in the late 1930s and in the first year of the war. Among the most prominent figures who sent telegrams of condolences, one can name marshals Meretskov and Bagramyan, the old Bolshevik E.D. Stasov.

About the grief of those who studied with Mekhlis in the courses of Marxism and at the Institute of Red Professors, wrote to his widow A.A. Zalkind, Zemlyachka's sister: "Forever in our memory will remain the bright image of Lev Zakharovich, a real Leninist-Stalinist, an implacable fighter against any Trotskyist-Zinoviev-Bukharinian evil spirits, the struggle against which he led both in the courses of Marxism and at the Institute of Red professors". The old Bolsheviks T. Lyudvinskaya and L. Levinson wrote about the same.

A sign that speaks a lot both about the time and about the people who surrounded the former Minister of State Control. In the hour of mourning, they remember not the human, spiritual qualities of the deceased, but the strength of the "kulaks" of an implacable political fighter.

Oh times, oh manners!

## CONCLUSION

There is a strict dialectical dependence between the historical assessment of any person and his real contribution to social development. Lev Mekhlis undoubtedly left his mark on the history of our country, but this mark is mainly negative. Even his positive qualities — high capacity for work, efficiency, personal courage, the ability to defend his point of view — most often obeyed evil will, embodying the orthodoxy of views and the cruelty of nature. In his practical activities, he unhesitatingly consigned moral categories to oblivion, as allegedly incompatible with real politics, and considered the results of this activity exclusively from a utilitarian standpoint: to what extent they corresponded to the instructions of the leader, who concentrated all political power in the USSR in the interests of the party. -state elite. Truly he was Stalin's hero.

It is likely that the reader who has reached the last pages has a question: did the author abuse the black ink? Was Mekhlis really a kind of monster who groveled before a tyrant, but did not know mercy and compassion for those who were destined to be sacrificed?

The author is tuned to his hero without prejudice. Unflattering but, we dare to hope, conclusions close to the truth were prompted by the revealed archival materials and the testimonies of people who knew Mekhlis well and encountered him on the paths of life, repeatedly cited in the book. The abyss of the moral fall of this man did not open immediately. Gradually, gradually, but how gaping she turned out to be!

Fifteen or twenty years ago, this person's assessments would certainly not have been so harsh. Not because, of course, that the author is distinguished by increased conformism. We are all for these

recent years have grown, expanded the horizons of knowledge about the past. It is impossible not to feel the beneficial effect of a noticeable growth in the political culture of society, familiarization with democratic values - freedom of expression, the absence of an ideological press, dissent, as opposed to the unanimity, unanimity and unanimity that used to exist in our country.

Until the mid-1980s, we could not even think of publicly raising the question, for example, about the responsibility of the political regime for the de-peasantization of the country or for the heavy defeats of the initial period of the Great Patriotic War, about extrajudicial reprisals against generals and ordinary soldiers, about the problem of collaborationism and captivity. The point of view that "the war has written everything off", that it is impossible to win without millions of victims, was so widespread that it seemed unshakable. But years have passed, and now, not only at the scientific, but also at the ordinary level, the question of the price of Victory is raised and resolved without too much sensationalism, as an urgent one. And the concept of humanism, which once sounded rather abstract in our society, has received concrete content.

The most vulnerable spot for Mekhlis, as a politician, lies precisely in the neglect of the principles of humanism. He rarely cared about the price that had to be paid to carry out this or that Stalin's order, his own order. Willingness not to reckon with any sacrifices, deep confidence in personal superiority, in his right to determine, often arbitrarily, capriciously, illegally, the fate of other people - these are the most flawed features of his personality.

He was one of the brightest types born of power that no one ever chose. Becoming at the head of the country as a result of an armed uprising, tearing away any political allies, unleashing a war against its own peasantry, suppressing even the appearance of opposition in the 1920s and 1930s, this power, in order to survive, inevitably had to resort to political and social mimicry, to realize their potential in an atmosphere of the strictest secrecy, to ensure existence through the constant reproduction of the image of the enemy.

People of a special psychology and morality were also in demand by such power - power-hungry, cruel, with a lowered moral threshold, confident in the ability to decide for others, in what general

stve those to live. At the same time, people of the Mekhlis breed preferred to govern, being mainly in the political shadow of the leader, the leader, and only occasionally appearing because of him.  
back.

Of course, Mekhlis became such in a certain historical setting. But after all, in the same environment, not only scoundrels were born, but also heroes. He chose his own path - the path of a faithful servant of a tyrant, the path of an inquisitor. For which they will be rejected by those for whom the concepts of conscience and morality are not a chimera, not "intellectualism" and evidence not of weakness, but of strength.

Evaluating a book is up to the reader. The author, in any case, has a firm conviction of the need to address the life and political activities of people from the Stalinist environment, armed with the tools of science. Indeed, to accurately imagine who and to what extent contributed to the formation of Stalinism as a repressive, anti-people regime is not only a legitimate desire of compatriots, but also a direct need. Otherwise, it turns out that Stalin alone is responsible for the crimes of the totalitarian political regime of the 1920s and 1950s. Let's not forget: a similar approach has already been demonstrated in



widely known closed report by N.S. Khrushchev at the 20th Congress of the CPSU. A return to such an assessment not only throws us back, at least, to the level of knowledge of half a century ago, but also makes it difficult to assimilate the lessons of the past.

And this understanding is vital. It is not a secret for anyone that many elements of the former nomenklatura-bureaucratic system of formation of state authorities are preserved in modern conditions. But this threatens society with relapses of totalitarianism, a rollback from basic democratic values, disappointment and civil apathy of the country's population.

As for Mekhlis, we should not be embarrassed by the fact that he did not claim, at least publicly, for the first roles in the party and the state and did not enter the Stalinist areo pag - the narrow circle of the Politburo of the Central Committee. But even from behind the leader, in his not so modest place in the "second row" of the highest party nomenclature, he did a lot to establish a regime of personal power in the USSR. Mekhlis was Stalin's shadow, his eyes and ears. In a society where democracy was only a decoration and a declaration

her, it gave no less rights and opportunities than a formal stay on key posts.

He went to his goal, breaking people's destinies and lives. Although even today some people are sure: at the time of repression, this man not only punished. He didn't seem to use compromising evidence on someone, he directly took someone under protection. One of the author's interlocutors, whose name appeared in the book, convinced that Mekhlis simply "succumbed to the atmosphere of general repressions, mired in distrust of people, did not object to Stalin ..."

This is a very common and very harmless view, especially since no, no, yes, today you hear a nostalgic-dreary sigh for the "iron hand", for the Stalinist "order".

What does "surrendered" mean? By the end of the 1930s, the cruel selection of personnel carried out by the leader left in his entourage only those who were ready to carry out any execution mission, the most bloodthirsty order. Yes, in most cases the choice was not rich: to become a victim or an executioner, to raise one's voice against the dictator, thereby signing one's own sentence, or to take the sin of war with one's own people upon one's soul.

Mekhlis did not use his chance of conscience, and, it seems, he did not intend to do so. Having chosen the lot of the oprichnik, he not only followed the deeply immoral logic of survival in the Stalinist environment, but, without a doubt, realized his own, perhaps deep in the subcortex, hidden complexes - the rapture of power over people, most often incomparably more gifted by nature according to compared to him. And it was not pity, not a desire to figure out whether there really was a person's fault, forced Mekhlis to withdraw the "axe" from someone. Stalin after all, too, not only executed. Someone transparently hinted at his suspicions, someone arrested close relatives. He kept people in fear, in tension, thereby depriving them of their will, subjugating them. According to the recipes of the teacher, the student also operated.

The moral degradation of the hero of the book was on the rise: from ramrod reprisals in the years of commissar youth and sophisticated beating of personnel during the time of mass repressions to the execution of generals and officers without trial during the Great Patriotic War and the suppression of the sprouts of free thought in the minds of the winners. fascism after it. And led him, ultimately, to a fiasco - as a politician and oblivion - as a person.

APPS

APPENDIX 1 MAIN BIOGRAPHY FACTS L.3. MEHLIS

1889, January 13 - was born in Odessa

1903-1911 — graduated from the 6th grade, at the rate of real, school, served as a clerk, gave private lessons

1905-1907 — during the years of the First Russian Revolution, he attended rallies, participated in the actions of the Jewish workers' self-defense unit

1907 - joined the Jewish Social Democratic Labor Party "Poalei Zion" (formally consisted until 1918)

1911 — called up for military service in the 2nd Grenadier Artillery Brigade of the 11th Army

1914-1917 - on the South-Western Front, there is no information about participation in hostilities

1917, February - in the city of Belaya Tserkov, he was elected to the council of workers' deputies

1918, January - in Odessa he was elected a member of Rumcherod - the Central Executive Committee of the Councils of Deputies of the Romanian Front, the Black Sea Fleet and the Odessa Military District. Participated in the establishment of Soviet power in the city

1918, March - joined the RCP (b)

1918, second half - 1919, March - at economic work in Kursk, Nizhny Novgorod, Kharkov

April 1919 - The Kharkov Provincial Committee of the RCP (b) was mobilized to the front at the disposal of the Revolutionary Military Council of the Kharkov direction group. Appointed political commissar of the reserve marching brigade in

Yekaterinoslav

July 1919 - appointed political commissar of the 46th Infantry Division on the Southern Front

1920, April - in the battle against the Wrangel landing in the Melitopol region was seriously wounded

1920, May - July - was on assignment at the Revolutionary Military Council of the Southwestern Front, where he met with a member of the Revolutionary Military Council I.V. Stalin

1920, July - September - as a military commissar of the Right-Bank Group of Forces of the 13th Army, a member of the Revolutionary Military Council of the 6th Army, participated in the capture and defense of the Kakhov bridgehead

1920, October - December - as a military commissar of the 46th Infantry Division participated in the defense of Yekaterinoslav, in the assault on the Chongar fortifications and the crossing of the Sivash, in the cleansing of the Crimea from the Wrangel troops

1920, end of December - elected to the 8th Congress of Soviets. Dismissed from the army and seconded to the disposal of the Central Committee of the RCP (b)

1921, January - November - worked as head of the office of the affairs of the Council of People's Commissars of the RSFSR

1921, November - 1922, October - in the People's Commissariat of the Workers' and Peasants' Inspection of the RSFSR as deputy manager of affairs, and then - deputy, acting. Manager of the Administrative Inspectorate

1922, November - 1926, January - in the Central Committee of the RCP (b). He worked as an assistant, first assistant to the General Secretary of the Central Committee of Stalin, head of the Bureau of the Secretariat of the Central Committee

1926 - 1927, the first half - studied at the courses of Marxism under the Communist academy

1927, second half - 1930, first half - student of the Institute of Red Professors in the Economics Department. He was one of the leaders in the fight against the "school" of N.I. Bukharin

1930, May - 1937, December - member of the editorial board, editorial secretary, editor-in-chief of the Pravda newspaper

1937, September - December - at the same time head of the Department of Printing and Publishing of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks

1934, February - at the XUP Congress of the CPSU (b) was elected a candidate member of the Central Committee of the CPSU (b)

1935, November - by the decision of the Bureau of the Presidium of the Communist Academy under the Central Executive Committee of the USSR, the degree of doctor was awarded

economic sciences

1937, October — at the plenum of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks he was elected a member of the Central Committee

December 1937 - Elected Deputy of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR of the first convocation

December 30, 1937 - September 6, 1940 - appointed head of the Political Directorate of the Red Army, Deputy People's Commissar of Defense of the USSR. The military rank of army commissar of the 2nd rank was awarded

1938 - 1952 - Member of the Organizing Bureau of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks

1938 - 1940 - participation in events in the area of the lake. Hasan, r. Khalkhin-Gol, "liberation campaign" in Western Ukraine, Western Belarus and Bessarabia, in the Soviet-Finnish war

1939, February 8 - conferred the military rank of army commissar of the 1st rank

1939, March - at the 18th Congress of the CPSU (b) he was again elected a member of the Central Committee and the Organizing Bureau of the Central Committee

September 6, 1940 — appointed People's Commissar of State Control of the USSR

1941, May - simultaneously appointed Deputy Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR, member of the Bureau of the Council of People's Commissars

On June 21, 1941, he was appointed to the post of head of the Main Directorate of Political Propaganda (from July 16, 1941 - Main Political Directorate) of the Red Army

July 10, 1941 — simultaneously appointed Deputy People's Commissar of Defense of the USSR

1941, end of June - July 12 - simultaneously performed the duties of a member of the military council of the Western Front

1941, the second half - under the authorization of the Headquarters of the Supreme Command, went to the Western, Reserve, Central, North-Western, Volkhov fronts

1942, January - May - served as a representative of the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command on the Crimean Front

June 4, 1942 - by order of the Headquarters of the All-Russian Supreme Command, he was relieved of his duties as head of the Main Political Directorate of the Red Army, Deputy People's Commissar of Defense of the USSR, reduced in the military

rank to corps commissar

1942, July - September - was a member of the Military Council of the 6th Ar

missions of the Voronezh Front

1942, September - 1946, February - Member of the Military Council of the Voronezh, Volkhov, Reserve, Bryansk, Baltic, 2nd Baltic, Western, 2nd Belorussian and 4th Ukrainian fronts, Steppe, Carpathian military districts

December 6, 1942 - awarded the military rank of lieutenant general

June 29, 1944 - awarded the military rank of Colonel General

1944, May — relieved of his duties as Deputy Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR

February 1946 - Elected Deputy of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR of the second convocation

March 1946 - October 1950 - worked as Minister of State Control of the USSR

1949, the end of December - fell seriously ill, did not return to active official and political activities

October 1952 - at the 19th Congress of the CPSU he was elected in absentia a member of the Central Committee

1953, February 13 - died after a serious illness, the urn with the ashes was buried on Red Square in the Kremlin wall

State awards:

four orders of Lenin (April 1937, February 1938, January 1949, April 1949), Order of Suvorov 1st class. (May 1945), Order of Kutuzov 1st class. (July 1944), Order of the Red Banner of the RSFSR (1929), Order of the Red Banner (August 1943), Order of the Red Star (March 1940), Polish Order of Virtuti Military, GU class (June 1946) d) medals.

## APPENDIX 2

RECORD OF A CONVERSATION WITH WRITER D.I. ORTENBERG' Author: David Iosifovich, for many years you have had close business and friendly contacts with Mekhlis. Under what circumstances

where did you get to know him?

' Recorded October 17, 1992

“h

Ortenberg: Mekhlis and I first met in Pravda. He was, by the way, a good editor. He knew the business of newspapers, was well versed in politics, was brave, and was not afraid of anything or anyone, even Stalin. There was a case: Stalin cursed Mekhlis with foul language. So he, too, did not remain in debt. Kaganovich turned out to be nearby, wrote a note to Lev Zakharovich (he later showed this note to me): “Are you out of your mind?” But this is by the way.

As for our relationship, at first, as it always happens, we looked closely at each other. Trust, and even more friendship, arose later, gradually. From 1936 I worked as a correspondent for a newspaper in the Ukraine. In 1937, in one of his correspondence, he criticized the party activists in Dnepropetrovsk. It was devoted to the state of criticism and self-criticism, but the speech of the secretary of the regional committee Khatayevich, and after it other speeches, were so slick,

complimentary. After the correspondence was published, I received a note from Khataevich: I will, they say, demand to the Central Committee that you be removed from the region.

I rushed off by car (it was possible by train, but I "caught fire", could not stand it) to Moscow. I went straight to Mekhlis and showed him Khatayevich's note. Just at the time of our conversation, a telegraph tape was brought with a message that the Dnepropetrovsk regional committee, having considered Ortenberg's article, recognized that it, the article, was correct, correct. Mekhlis immediately gave the command to put the information in the next issue, and about the note he went straight to Stalin. I don't know how their conversation ended, they said that Khataevich received a reprimand. But the main thing, it seems to me, is different: Mekhlis boldly stood up for his correspondent, he believed people.

Author: Believe? Many hard facts say just the opposite ...

Ortenberg: I understand that you mean repressions and so on. Indeed, a lot is written about the participation of Mekhlis in repressions, including military personnel. Maybe the facts are. I personally know and know for sure: he did not betray anyone, and sometimes he directly took him under protection.

Take the story of my transition from my own correspondents to the apparatus of Pravda. By this time, Mekhlis, while remaining editor-in-chief, was appointed head of the press department of the Central Committee of the party. Selecting personnel, he decided to take me and a correspondent to the department

"27

in the Saratov region Fighting. He asked the local authorities about us, without specifying what this information was for. A month later, we are summoned to the Central Committee and shown a bunch of materials: it turns out that we are closely connected with the enemies of the people. They demanded an explanation from us. They wrote, but, in general, what to explain: on the ground, not knowing the true reasons for the request from the Central Committee, they decided that compromising evidence was required, and tried with might and main. What time was it - 1937! And they would immediately be told that the characteristics are needed for promotion, so they would be like that, at least imagine for the hero of socialist labor.

Nevertheless, Mekhlis read our explanations, summoned him and said: I believe you. And we began to work: Boyev - in PUR, I - in the "Red Star". But it could have been completely different. He sent this pile of materials to the NKVD, and I don't know if I would have had enough willpower to withstand the beatings and bullying.

Another incident comes to mind. As deputy editor of Zvezdochka, I came to him already as the head of the Political Directorate of the Red Army. He confidentially showed me a folder with materials on F.F. Kuznetsov, who shortly before became his deputy. And there is nothing there: he is connected with those enemies, and with these. Yai did not look: slander, I say, I do not believe that Kuznetsov is an enemy (I knew him quite well before). Mekhlis believed me again.

- To hell with her! - He said, putting the folder away in the safe. And so this "thing" died.

It's his fault that he didn't always take people under protection. Some, whom he simply had to, he did not protect. It is his direct fault that he did not defend Mikhail Koltsov, whom he highly valued. Obviously, by this time he too was mired in distrust of people, succumbed to the repressive flow, did not object to Stalin. Times have changed. I would not have dared to cover Stalin with foul language. Was he afraid of him? It is unlikely, but he no longer dared to contradict, especially on big questions.

Take the Kyiv defensive operation in the summer of 1941. Zhukov proposed to withdraw the troops, Stalin objected, and Mekhlis supported the Supreme. In such matters, Lev Zakharovich did not show himself worthy.

Author: We smoothly approached the question of what Mekhlis was like in the war. What is your opinion?

Ortenberg: First of all, let me tell you about the positive in Mekhlis, which I myself saw, what I was a witness to. He was an unconditional

noah courage, courage. How many times I came to where he was, I never saw him in the rear. He, arriving at a division, regiment, sat not only on the NP, but also went to the trenches, to the soldiers.

I remember the case was on the Voronezh front. We went with him to the front line. The situation is unclear, and ended up in no man's land. The Germans were within a few tens of meters. Without losing his presence of mind, Mekhlis commanded the driver: "Back!" If he was confused, it is not known what would have ended ...

From the bullets he was as if charmed. He was never wounded, although he ended up in various alterations.

Another example, but already from the Kursk Bulge. G.K. was on the NP of the commander of the Bryansk Front. Zhukov. All this is one and a half to two kilometers from the front line. It was clearly visible how our advancing tanks suddenly stood up. Zhukov is pointing with his finger - stuck, stuck tanks. Mehliis called the car - and there. It was inconvenient for me to lag behind, I was behind him. The front line was heavily shelled, I jumped into the trench. And Mekhlis picked up some kind of stick, went up to the tank and pounded on the armor. From there, the tanker looked out. Mehliis to him: why are you standing? Who is the commander? He pointed to a tank thirty meters away. Lev Zakharovich went up to the commander's tank and knocked again. An officer looked out, who turned out to be the battalion commander. To the same question, Mekhlisa replied: we do not have, they say, any instructions. "So here's an indication for you - let's go ahead!". The tanks moved on, and we returned to the OP.

Author: There is a lot of evidence that Mekhlis was cruel and rude. How did this conversation take place?

Ortenberg: Absolutely normal, calm. Frankly, I, as the editor of Krasnaya Zvezda, and later the head of the political department of the 38th Army, had a chance to see Mekhlis on almost all fronts, where he was a member of the Military Council. And never once had to be a witness to the fact that he scolded one of the commanders or soldiers, did not meet this. Perhaps because in danger, as far as I can judge from personal impressions, he never got lost.

Here's a case from the Finnish war. We were together in the 11th Army, where I edited the newspaper Heroic Campaign. Somehow we went to one of the divisions. We drove there normally, but the Finns cut off the way back. Mekhlis gave me a car - a former Leningrad taxi, a truck with several fighters as guards: "Break through

you!" We managed to slip through the still fragile ice of the freshly frozen lake. And Mekhlis himself, with the division commander, led her way out of the encirclement.

He was always eager to go to the front during the Great Patriotic War. It's another matter that I didn't always find a job there on my own. At the beginning of the war, he was sent to some fronts as a representative of the Headquarters. At this time, GlavPUR actually remained without leadership. I personally think it was wrong. There was something to do in GlavPUR, and there, at the front, Mekhlis clutched at everything, although he did not understand either tactics or operational art, which Crimea confirmed in the spring of 1942.

Author: You worked with Mekhlis for a long time both in Pravda, and in the state control, and in the PUR, you closely communicated with him, being the editor-in-chief of Krasnaya Zvezda. What can you say about his relationship with I.V. Stalin?

Ortenberg: Stalin trusted him. When Lev Zakharovich was removed from his post after the Crimea and demoted in rank, he spent some time at home. I just went to him. He walked around the office extremely upset, he told me: "That's it, it's all over." I began to calm him down. At this time, a courier comes in with a package. And there is the resolution of the Central Committee on the inclusion of Mekhlis in the Council for Military-Political Propaganda under GlavPUR. The Council had advisory powers, but all well...

"You see," I say to Mekhlis, "Stalin has not forgotten you."

An even more interesting fact relates to 1952 and is connected with the 19th Party Congress. Mekhlis then lived in a dacha in Petrovo-Dalnyi. By that time, he had been ill for a long time, his right hand did not work, he could take no more than a few steps. And yet, having learned about the preparations for the congress, he wrote a letter to Stalin with a request to be allowed to be present, as a member of the Central Committee, at the meetings, at least with the right of an advisory vote. I dissuaded him: where, they say, you are so helpless. For this reason, probably, Stalin refused Lev Zakharovich. He suffered terribly. One day of the congress passes, the second, the third ... Mekhlis could not find a place for himself. I reassured him, I said: it is inconvenient to be present among the delegates in such a physical condition, what can people think? But now the congress is over. We receive Pravda with the results of the elections to the Central Committee. In the list of readers' favorites is Lev Zakharovich Mekhlis. I don't remember another case like this.

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party history. Of course, it was Stalin who remembered Mekhlis. He was terribly pleased.

Author: What was he like as People's Commissar, and then Minister of State Control?

Ortenberg: On the line of state control, I had a chance to work with him only before the war. When Lev Zakharovich was appointed people's commissar, he received Stalin's consent to transfer some workers from the military department. He also took me as the head of the organizational department, a kind of chief of staff. In those six months we saw each other almost daily. With the apparatus, he behaved well, evenly. To scold someone, to say abominations - there was no such thing. Another thing - slobs, lawbreakers, spenders of public funds. The orders against them were really harsh, harsh, irreconcilable. That's why they were afraid of him.

Author: There were legends about the efficiency of Mekhlis... .

Ortenberg: Not without reason. As the editor of Pravda, he was accustomed to working until morning. The newspaper was printed until 3-4 o'clock, and until he signed it to the public, he did not leave the editorial office. He leaves home, and after a couple of hours there is already a call: he is interested in how the circulation is sent out. And so almost every day.

He was very strict with materials. It used to require an advanced one. Bring him a foot, he will look at one - if he doesn't like it, put it in the basket! The second - do not like it, in the basket! The third - in the basket! Requires:

- Let's do it again.

- No more...

Then he takes the text back from the basket and let's edit. Ruled very carefully. At first, when I, as deputy editor-in-chief of Krasnaya Zvezda, brought him strips for the PUR, he did not spare an hour or two to straighten out an editorial, theoretical or staged article, to come up with a headline. He also carefully taught us to work.

He was a capable and knowledgeable editor. His language was not bad, which made him stand out from other party workers.

Author: This is how he behaved with his subordinates. And what about senior leaders?

Ortenberg: I have already spoken about relations with Stalin. With the members of the Politburo, Mekhlis kept himself on an equal footing. Stalin

strongly supported, and Lev Zakharovich took this into account in his relations with other senior leaders, was not afraid to argue with them, to object.

Author: Was he friends with any of the members of the Politburo?

Ortenberg: No, not with anyone. He had no close friends at all. If there was anyone after the war, it was me. When he fell ill, no one from the Politburo came to visit him.

Author: Did the post-war campaign against cosmopolitans touch him in any way?

Ortenberg: No, absolutely. But here he followed strictly after Stalin.

Author: What was Mehliis like in everyday life?

Ortenberg: He was very modest, I would even say scrupulous. Such a trifle is characteristic: as a people's commissar, cigarettes were given to him free of charge, he did not take, he paid money. I did not bring anything from the front, although this was not considered shameful, and could be done on completely legal grounds.

At the end of 1945, I met him on his return from abroad to Moscow. I see him getting out of the car with a vacuum cleaner: you know, there were such small, primitive ones then. Apparently, noticing my surprise, he hastened to immediately explain that he bought the thing from the conductor, and presented a receipt as proof. I remember, I already laughed: to what insanity his modesty reached! So was his wife.

Mehliis was very worried about his son, who suffered from a mental illness. He hoped that maybe he would outgrow it over the years, he took him to the front with him, but due to illness he was forced to return his son to Moscow. After the war, he lived for some time with his parents in the country. It happened that in winter it would open all the windows wide open - what to do with it? Lev Zakharovich was very worried. Well, when he himself fell seriously ill, he was forced to place his son in a special clinic. It's also a human tragedy...

Author: Did Mekhlis have any hobbies, interests outside of service? |

Ortenberg: Hunting, fishing or something like that? No. From morning to night he was absorbed in work. He worked, to say the least, user

the bottom, worked selflessly.

### APPENDIX 3

"PERSONAL CARD OF THE COMMUNIST", FILLED BY L.Z. MEHLISOM DECEMBER 31, 1920 WHEN DISCHARGING FROM THE RED ARMY!

Mobilization part of PUR Form No. | COMMUNIST PERSONAL CARD No...

Surname, name and patronymic Mskhlis Lev Zakharovich

ra sa o VO r

native language Russian

2 |M

What other languages do I understand Svrean Education (what did I graduate from or did I sense study at?  
DEZ | Marital status and family composition

was at the front

commanded by Khar[kovskaya]

organ[ization]

in April 1919



ESH Who time goes to the front was all from April

To which organization does the RCP belong (city, district, membership card number) Time of joining the RCP (year and month) March—April [19] 18

in E.S.D.R.P. in the Odessa organization since 1907

ol

Who will be sent to the front

Whether he was a member of other parties, which ones and when

When, where and how did the duties performed in the desks. organizations before 1917

Did he speak at rallies, at meetings, in front of whom

HER

! Extracted from: RGVA, f. 40884, op. 1, d. 2, l. 5-6.

vg Odessa vs. Did he take direct. participation and Gaidamakov kakos precisely in the revolutions in January [19] 18 March and October. Belaya Tserkov in March

What part. work in the ku RGR military commissar 46 present. time and where

vrsta A]

When and what duties did you perform in a professional organization

< |

Was he in military service before the revolution, how many years and in what part of the troops

Type of weapon wielded

Was in the training team, what time

What were the military command posts before the revolution

m i

Was where in the battles during the imperialist war

to Mÿ

What duties did he perform in the Red Guard

g 129)

When he joined the Red Army and what duties did he perform in it from April [19] 19

ma >

very many from April [i] In what battles did [19] 19 g before the liquidation of Wrangel

Whether and when he was injured April 17 [19] 20y Current state of health is poor

Mÿ I

19

26. 27.

The main occupation in the pre-rev. period (in which enterprises, when and in what capacity)

side occupation

Position currently held and where

o

What elective positions did he hold in the Soviet Republic

>=

◁ No. |

#### APPENDIX 4

LETTER L.3. MEHLIS TO THE SECRETARY OF THE CC AUCP(b) L.M. KAGANOVICH OF JULY 20, 1925 ON THE PROCEDURE FOR PREPARING MEETINGS OF THE POLITBURO OF THE CC' -

Dear Lazar Moiseevich!

I could not answer your letter in a timely manner due to the exceptional workload of urgent work. I still feel guilty and want to fill in the gap at least in a hurry - a couple of hours before leaving on vacation.

I turn to the essence of the issues raised.

##### 1. Which of the issues are included in the agenda of the PB

As practice has established (so in the letter. - Yu.R.), that not a single issue, mainly economic and financial, is included in the agenda of the PB without its preliminary consideration in the Soviet order, i.e. financial and economic issues come to the consideration of the Central Committee only as an appeal against the decision of the Soviet authorities or, if the issue in itself is of particular (hereinafter emphasized by L.Z. Mekhlis. - O.R.) important (budget, export-import plan, currency balance, etc.).

With regard to political issues of international importance (NKID, ECCI, etc.), it was established that they are considered directly in the PB.

##### 2. The procedure for working out questions for the PB meeting

The materials received by the Central Committee on international, economic and other issues subject to consideration by the PB are transferred to one of the assistants to the Secretary General for review and development. Elaboration consists in: 1) finding out whether the question should be raised at all on the PB, 2) what decisions were taken by the Central Committee (the Politburo, the Orgburo or the Secretariat) before on this or a similar issue, 3) sending materials for the conclusion of the interested departments.

When this entire "procedure" is completed, a card must be filled in to include the issue on the first provisional agenda of the Politburo (the card is attached).

i Retrieved from: RGASPI, f. 17, op. 86, d. 75, l. 166-167.

This card with materials (except for especially confidential ones) is transferred to the technical secretariat of the Politburo, where it is entered in a special book of issues included in the PB agenda.

(the form of the book is attached). In addition, the first preliminary agenda includes issues in the order of control over the decisions of the Politburo.

Mondays at 7 o'clock. In the evening we are considering the first provisional agenda of the PB. When considering the agenda (present: head of the Bureau of the Secretariat, assistants to the Secretary General, secretary of the PB, assistant head of the Bureau of the Secretariat and secretary of the Politburo on duty in charge of control), questions are briefly heard, it turns out which of the questions remain for the provisional agenda of the PB, which represents - to be approved by the Secretary General with the participation of the secretaries (this part of the procedure for approving the agenda is well known to you).

### 3) Other moments of the passage of questions in the Politburo

Due to the brevity of time and the possible incompleteness of an accurate coverage of the issue, I do not touch on the remaining moments of the passage of questions. It would be highly expedient if Comrade Ilyinsky would visit us for a week (or so) and spend this time with us on practical work. He would then catch all the main points and take the materials with him.

I am very sorry for the second time, Comrade Kaganovich, that I could not answer your questions fully and in time, despite the fact that, according to accumulated experience, the answer in itself, although of a private nature, presented no difficulties.

L. Mehlis. July 20, 1925

## APPENDIX 5

### ARTICLE FROM THE PARIS EMIGRANTY MAGAZINE "SENTRY" IN CONNECTION WITH THE APPOINTMENT L.3. MEHLIS HEAD OF PU RKKA!

According to the unwritten Soviet table of ranks, the post of head of the Political [Chief] Directorate of the Red Army is one of the most important in

Soviet [Soviet] Union. PUR working as a military department

| Watch, 1938, No. 217-218. pp. 6-7.

The Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks, along with the Special Department of the NKVD, monitors the reliability of the army, the mood of the soldiers and commanders, the degree of their devotion to the dictator, trying to instill in them blind obedience to the Stalinist regime. The fate and career of each commander depends on the certification of the PUR and the commissars and political departments of military units subordinate to it.

Therefore, the head[of] the PUR, in essence, as the second NK of Defense, with the opinion of which they take into account more than with the opinion of the official head of the armed forces of the USSR Voroshilov.

After the suicide in May [19]37 of the long-term head of the PUR, Gamarnik, and the transfer to the NK of the fleet that replaced him, Smirnov, a person appeared in this post who had no connection with the former leadership of the Red[asnaya] Army — the editor of Pravda, Lev Zakharovich Mehlis.

Along with Yezhov and several other "nominees" of 37, Mekhlis belongs to Stalin's immediate circle. For many years now, the dictator's hand has carefully placed them in outwardly unobtrusive and invisible positions, full, however, of hidden influence and significance. During the seven years of Mekhlis' editorship, not a single article signed by his name appeared in Pravda, but it was precisely this light hand that began printing countless images of Stalin and filling newspaper pages with senselessly enthusiastic praises in

honor of the "brilliant" leader.

The past of M]echlisa] is not difficult - a native Odessa citizen, born in 1889. A petty clerk with an incomplete primary education, like most Jewish youth, captured by the revolutionary wave of 1905. Demonstrations, rallies, arrest for possession of weapons and

a beating at the police station, now politely referred to as a "wound." Member (1907-10) of the Jewish] working] s. party, who joined the Bolshevik ranks only in March [19] 18. During the war - a private of the IX Army, who did not advance even after the October coup further than a member of the collegium of the Economic Council of Ukraine. From [19]19 - Commissar of the 46th Rifle Division on the Polish front and near Kakhovka. Light wound near Genichesk.

Only from [19] 22 did the unhurried rise of Mehlis, who got a job in the secretariat of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks, begin. Here is the first meeting with Stalin. And while the head of the Communist Party, after the death of Lenin, hesitates between Trotsky, Zinoviev, Bukharin, M[echlis] guesses the right course - he stakes on Stalin, helps him to hide the actions of the opposition, false

falsifies the results of voting and elections in party organizations, selects data and documents compromising oppositionists. According to rumors, even the agile and dexterous hands of Mekhlis were involved in concealing Lenin's true testament, directed against Stalin and kept in the secretariat. Having secured the trust of the established "leader", M[echlis] sits down to study — he takes courses in Marxism at the Komacademy and in [19]30 he graduates from the Institute of Red [red] professorship.

Further - the editorial office of Pravda, 2 orders and the post of head of the PUR.

Long detached from the army, elevated, bypassing all the previous [preceding] ranks, immediately to the army] commissars 2 p. M[echlis], upon taking office, encounters the envious hostility of his colleagues, which he cuts down in a Stalinist way - accusing 2 of his deputies - Bulin and Osepyan of fascism and sending them with many other PUR employees to the NKVD, where for the arrested army there is only one resolution - to shoot.

The purge of the army, begun by M[echlis] in January, has not been completed to this day. A diligent executor of Stalin's plans is trying to break the rebellious army. So far, victory is on the side of Mekhlis - in his "asset" of the head of Marshal Yegorov, army commanders Dybenko, Belov, Kuibyshev. A new order, like a drop of blood, on a badly tailored uniform. Stalin's new favors, deputy seat in the Soviet (young) "parliament".

And ahead - either a rapid transition to the category of "mad dogs", or a greedy bullet of an avenger.

## APPENDIX 6

### FRAGMENTS OF THE REPORT L.Z. MEHLIS ON MILITARY IDEOLOGY AT THE MEETING OF THE HIGHEST LEADING STAFF OF THE RKKA May 13, 1940!

In matters of military ideology, we turned out to be quite carefree. Everyday routine was crushing at work, and empiricism flourished.

Comrade STALIN, in his speech at the military conference in the Kremlin, raised before us questions of military ideology in full breadth and revealed a number of flagrant mistakes and blunders.

! Historical archive, 1997, No. 5-6. pp. 82-99.

Based on the instructions of Comrade STALIN, we need to make a serious turn towards military ideology. The most revolutionary party in the world must have the most advanced military ideology. It is no longer fitting for us, the military detachment of the Bolshevik Party, to endure the backwardness in the field of military ideology that is taking place.

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Questions of military ideology, if roughly divided, consist of two parts of a dialectically unified whole: a) these are questions of our military doctrine and b) questions of education of the army in the broadest sense of the word.

Comrade STALIN put forward the thesis - do not elevate the experience of the civil war into a cult, put an end to this cult. Much follows from this thesis.

1. A modern big war, which the capitalist world can impose on the Soviet Union, will require the maximum exertion of all the human strength and material resources of our country. Until recent years, many commanders of the Red Army imagined this future war as a sum of purely maneuverable operations, characterized by high mobility, actions on the flanks and behind enemy lines, and the organization of operational coverage, bypass and encirclement. Such comrades proceeded from a mechanical (italics by L.Z. Mekhlis. — Yu.R.) transferring to the future of the experience of the civil war in the USSR...

2. The war with Finland was the first after the civil war of 1918-1920. a combat clash in which our still young and essentially unfired army collided with modern means and conditions for conducting an operation and positional warfare ...

The war with Finland has clearly revealed a number of significant shortcomings in the education of our Red Army. The level of training of command personnel, the level of ideas of commanders and fighters about war and combat turned out to not fully meet the actual requirements and real conditions of our time. This led to individual setbacks and unnecessary losses, and in a number of cases revealed the low tactical and rifle training of the troops, the unpreparedness of some commanders and chiefs for command and control of troops in modern complex combat, and their inability to correctly use the technical means of combat. discovered

There are also a number of flagrant shortcomings and blunders in the content of propaganda and agitation...

3. The Red Army, like any army, is an instrument of war. All personnel of the Red Army must be educated in peacetime on the basis of a common goal—preparation for war. Our war with the capitalist world will be a just, progressive war. The Red Army will act actively, achieving the complete defeat and crushing of the enemy, transferring military operations to enemy territory. In accordance with this, it is necessary to educate the entire personnel of the army and our entire country in that spirit. That every war waged by the army of socialism will be the most just war that has ever been...

It [Also] is about the active action of the victorious proletariat and the working people of the capitalist countries against the bourgeoisie, about such active action when our state and its Workers 'and Peasants' Red Army will act as the initiator of a just war. In this spirit, we need to educate our Red Army and the entire proletariat, so that everyone knows that our every war, wherever it takes place, is a progressive and just war.

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If we can talk about the main danger today in matters of military doctrine, then our main danger is the underestimation of the difficulties of maneuver warfare...

It is obvious that the theory of an indiscriminate offensive must be resolutely and quickly put an end to, for it leads to arrogance, hatred and one-sidedness in the preparation of the army.

ry

6. We have widely promoted the thesis of the invincibility of our Red Army, but history does not know invincible armies ... The army, of course, must be educated so that it is confident in its own strength. The army must be instilled with a spirit of confidence (italics by L.Z. Mekhlis. — Y.R.) in its power, but not in the sense of boasting... - fights and temporary setbacks.

7. The international tasks of the Red Army are also incorrectly covered. In printed and oral propaganda to the fore

the thesis is put forward about the liberating role of our army... Of course, in all cases, having entered enemy territory, we will be in the role of liberators of the working people from the exploiting classes. But in practical work one cannot hurl slogans at all... Meanwhile, the slogan about the international tasks of the Red Army is very often given out of time, without regard to conditions and without regard to who is being appealed to.

At the first stage of military operations at Khalkhin Gol, propaganda was based on the slogan of fulfilling the agreement on mutual assistance with the MPR and assistance to the friendly Mongolian people. This slogan turned out to be incomprehensible to the Red Army soldiers, especially those called up from the reserve. Many did not understand why we signed an agreement with the MPR. During the fighting, an amendment was made. It was widely explained that the Mongolian People's Republic is the key to our borders, and that "by defending the borders of the Mongolian People's Republic, the Red Army defends the territory of the Soviet Union from Baikal to Vladivostok, and prevents Japan from turning the Mongolian People's Republic into a springboard for a war against the USSR"...

A similar mistake was made in the first period of the war with the White Finns, especially with the government of Kuusinen. The unlucky political workers mechanically learned the slogan about the international tasks of the Red Army, about the liberation of the Finnish people, and treated this slogan equally to the Finnish population and soldiers, and to their own troops. They did not take into account the fact that if a Finnish soldier can and should be told that the Red Army is bringing him liberation, then for our Red Army soldiers this slogan will not always be understandable and close ...

In Comrade MOLOTOV's speech, it was said that the Red Army was waging a war for the security of the city of Leningrad and our northwestern borders, waging a war to destroy the military bridgehead that was being prepared by the opponents of the Soviet Union. When this correct slogan, given by the Central Committee and the government, was again confirmed by our political workers, it gave much greater meaning and effectiveness to our propaganda. This slogan was clear to all personnel.

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Military scientific work in the Red Army lags sharply behind the requirements for advanced Soviet science. Military thought is fettered, its development is not encouraged, and therefore it ossifies ... Weakly

military history is studied, especially Russian. We have an incorrect slandering of the old army, but meanwhile, we had such wonderful generals of the tsarist army as SUVOROV, KUTUZOV, BAGRATION (emphasized by L.Z. Mekhlis. - Yu.R.), who will always remain in memory people as great Russian generals and honored by the Red Army, which inherited the best fighting traditions of the Russian soldier...

Military History Department of the General Staff. works completely unsatisfactorily and does not fulfill the tasks of organizing the propaganda of military-historical knowledge in the thickness of the army. All this leads to ignoring concrete historical experience, and meanwhile the best teacher is history.

Entering the war with Finland, our main command staff did not know that Russia in the 18-19 centuries. fought in this theater four times, including in winter ... We have, albeit small, experience of the war near Lake Khasan, on the Khalkhin Gol River, as well as the experience of a campaign in Western Ukraine and Western Belarus, but it is unknown to our commanders current composition. Materials about these battles lie hidden in the General Staff...

12. The study of the armies of potential adversaries and possible theaters of military operations is completely unsatisfactory...

A harmful prejudice is deeply rooted that, supposedly, the population of the countries entering the war with the USSR will inevitably and almost completely rise up and go over to the side of the Red Army, that the workers and peasants will greet us with flowers. This false belief grows out of ignorance of the actual situation in neighboring countries. The war in Finland showed that we did not conduct political intelligence in the northern regions and therefore did not know what slogans to approach this population and how to work among them.

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What do we need to raise military ideology and military science to the level of the requirements of modern warfare?

For this, it is necessary, first of all, to eliminate the chatter about the invincibility of the Red Army, to eliminate arrogance, superficiality and hatred ... It is necessary to more flexibly, quickly draw conclusions from the new that modernity brings to military affairs

and immediately put these conclusions into practice, both in the field of improving technology and in the development of tactics and operational art.

It is necessary to take a new approach to the selection of personnel for leading positions in the army. The criterion for the promotion of personnel must be the degree of understanding by the commander of the conditions of modern warfare ...

It is necessary to improve the military culture of our command cadres... All the training and life of the Red Army must be structured in relation to the conditions of a combat situation...

By all means to instill in the personnel of the Red Army a military spirit, to educate them on the positive examples of the history of the Russian army, its traditions and the steadfastness of its soldiers.

Get rid of the liberalism widely developed in the army in relation to people who violate the statutory provisions and military discipline.

Do not introduce into the level of a cult the position that the Red Army must always and everywhere only advance ...

Eliminate simplification in the education of army command personnel... In order to have a competent and cultured commander, it is necessary to direct training and education to instill commanding ethics and morality, honor and dignity, love for military affairs in the commanding staff and my part...

The basis of the foundations of the education of command personnel should be a deep study of the history of the CPSU (b), military history, a wide mastery of military literature ... Propaganda in the Red Army should not be limited only to the theory and history of the Bolshevik Party. It was a mistake that we were carried away only by the propaganda of the "Short Course in the History of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks" and forgot the propaganda that obliges us to respond to everything. Propaganda of military culture and knowledge has not yet become an integral part of all educational work in the Red Army ...

We must stop the incorrect presentation of the international tasks of the Red Army and explain to the personnel that our main and fundamental task is the active defense of the Soviet Union.

Create an authoritative department for the study of war experience within the General Staff system; transfer to it the functions of the corresponding military history department and the intelligence department of the Red Army (the latter in terms of developing the experience of modern wars),

as well as leadership of the research work of the Academy

of the General Staff and the Frunze Military Academy, conducting

military archives, museums, the central military library... <...> |

## APPENDIX 7

FRAGMENTS OF THE DIRECTIVE OF THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSIONER OF DEFENSE OF THE USSR I.V. STALIN AND THE HEAD OF THE Glavpu RKKA L.3. MEHLIS IN CONNECTION WITH THE INTRODUCTION OF THE INSTITUTE OF MILITARY COMMISSIONERS July 20, 1941

Secret to the Military Councils of fronts, armies, districts, heads of political agencies, military commissars of divisions and regiments

Our country is in serious danger. The enemy is approaching our most important political and economic centers, posing a threat to Moscow, Leningrad and Kyiv. On the battlefields with the Nazi invaders, the fate of Soviet power is being decided, the question of life and death of the peoples of the Soviet Union, the question of whether the working people of our Motherland should be free and independent or fall into slavery, be Germanized.

Now, more than ever, the will to win, ideological unity, iron discipline, organization, a merciless struggle against traitors and traitors, with complacency and carelessness, against cowards, alarmists and deserters, the greatest dedication, readiness to make any sacrifices are needed more than ever. In the name of victory over the enemy, the readiness of every Red Army soldier, commander and political worker to fight to the last drop of blood, not sparing his life, for

every inch of Soviet land. B

Extracted from: APRF, f. 3, op. 50, d. 23, l. 64-69.

The People's Commissariat of Defense demands from all military commissars and political workers:

1. To be true representatives of the Party and the Government, Bolshevik commissars of the Leninist-Stalinist temper, militant Bolsheviks, militant bearers of the spirit of our Party, its discipline, its firmness, selflessness, courage and unshakable will to win in the struggle against the enemies of the socialist Motherland. Preserve and multiply the combat traditions of the commissars of the times of the Civil War, Khalkhin Gol and the war with the Finnish White Guards.
2. To be in fact the eyes and ears of the Bolshevik Party and the Soviet government, the most vigilant and knowledgeable people in the units. To know the operational situation in detail, to help the commander develop a combat order, to strictly control the implementation of all orders of the high command.
3. Timely signal to the High Command and the Government about commanders and political workers who are unworthy of the title of commander and political worker and who discredit the honor of the Workers' and Peasants' Red Army by their behavior.

Ba

5. To inspire and encourage the personnel of the units, to pour into them unshakable faith in the strength of Soviet weapons, in the victory of the Red Army over the Nazi hordes. In the most serious moments of the battle, the military commissar is obliged by an example of personal courage and courage to raise morale and achieve unconditional fulfillment of part of the combat order.

6. With an iron hand to impose revolutionary order, discipline and mercilessly punish alarmists, cowards, defeatists, deserters and everyone who arbitrarily leaves their positions without an order from the high command. Remember that the military commissars, along with the commanders, bear full responsibility for cases of treason and betrayal in the unit, for its retreat without an order.

Ba



8. Clear all parts of dubious people, taking into account that among those called up in the western regions of Ukraine, Belarus, as well as among those called up in Moldova, Bukovina and the Baltic states

a significant number of traitors turned out to be.

Those leaving the encirclement in the western regions of Ukraine, Belorussia and the Baltic states, alone and in groups of commanders, political workers and Red Army soldiers, are carefully checked together with special departments so that not a single spy can get into our ranks.

>

11. Manage daily political agencies, party and Komsomol organizations. To ensure that they do not sit in their offices and move from abstract propaganda to combat affairs, show maximum flexibility and efficiency, and respond quickly and correctly to all phenomena in the life of units and subunits.

<...>

14. To unite and coordinate the work of military tribunals, military prosecutor's offices and special departments. To ensure that all traitors and traitors, all disorganizers, cowards, alarmists and deserters, regardless of their faces, immediately bear the most severe punishment.

22

People's Commissar of Defense

I. Stalin

Deputy People's Commissar of Defense, Head of the Main Political Directorate, army commissar of the 1st rank L. Mekhlis.

## APPENDIX 8

THE TEXT OF THE LEAFLETER WITH AN APPEAL TO THE CAPTIVED RED ARMENIANS,  
WRITTEN BY L.Z. MEHLISOM (Autumn 1941)'

rl

Captured Red Army soldiers!

To you, comrade-brothers, who were captured by the fascist invaders, to you, the sons of the Great Soviet country, we, your compatriots, countrymen, turn (added and then crossed out: "Red Army men and commanders." - Yu.R.) .

'

Extracted from: TsAMO, f. 32, op. 11309, d. 21, l. 117.

"T

You fell into the clutches of the insidious enemies of the German monsters (crossed out: "They are trying to get information about our units from you, promising a good life in return." – Yu.R.). They torture you with hunger and cold, they force you to dig trenches, bring shells to the enemy, help the Germans in their vile war of conquest against our homeland, your brothers in the Red Army, against your wives, children, fathers and mothers.

Brother comrades! Remember that you are the sons of the Soviet people, remember your military oath.

Do not let yourself be deceived (the last two words are inserted instead of the one that has been crossed out: "no information to the enemy." – Yu.R.). Do not believe the false promises of the fascist deceivers. Remember that the German wants to destroy the Slavic peoples, to turn them into his slaves. Know that in captivity you will eventually face a painful death. Know that by remaining in captivity, you doom your

families to shame and contempt. Your relatives and friends will pronounce your names with disgust, hate you.

Do not waste a single minute, use all means, all ways, destroy your guards, run away from fascist captivity. Run in groups and alone, make your way to your fraternal family - the Red Army. Do not be afraid of the threats of fascist dogs.

Our forces are growing stronger not by the day, but by the hour. The brown plague of German fascism will be destroyed. Move quickly to your own family. The enemy does not have a solid front. You will always make your way through the forest to your people in order to fulfill your duty to the Motherland. We will meet you as brothers who escaped from fascist captivity.

Command of the No. unit

Red Army.

(The last paragraph was inserted by L.Z. Mekhlis instead of the previously deleted phrases:

"Do not be afraid of danger. It is better to die in a fight with the enemy than to become a slave of fascist monsters, a traitor to the motherland.

We are confident that you will break free from the clutches of the German fascist dogs. Fulfill your duty to the Motherland, to the Soviet people honestly and to the end.

Military Council of the Army. - Yu.R.)

"027

## APPENDIX 9

FRAGMENTS OF THE STAFF DIRECTIVE No. 155452 TO THE MILITARY COUNCILS OF THE FRONTS AND ARMIES ON THE REASONS FOR THE DEFEAT OF THE CRIMEAN FRONT IN THE KERCH OPERATION dated June 4, 1942!

In the period from May 8 to May 20, the troops of the Crimean Front fought unsuccessful battles with the advancing enemy on the Kerch Peninsula and were defeated ...

The study of the course of the entire Kerch operation revealed the inconsistency of the leadership of the front troops by the commander of the Crimean Front, Lieutenant General Kozlov, a member of the Military Council, Divisional Commissar Shamanin, the Chief of Staff, Major General Vechny, and the representative of the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command, Army Commissar 1st rank Mekhlis.

1

The main reason for the failure of the Kerch operation is that the command of the front - Kozlov, Shamanin, Vechny, the representative of the Headquarters Mekhlis ... showed a complete misunderstanding of the nature of modern warfare, which was reflected in the following facts.

1. The experience of modern warfare, where tanks and aircraft play a large role, shows that the outcome of a battle and the fate of troops cannot be made dependent only on field fortifications and battle order forces linearly stretched along the front edge...

Contrary to this experience, the command of the Crimean Front stretched its divisions into one line, disregarding the open flat character of the terrain, pushed all the infantry and artillery close to the enemy and did not create reserves in depth ... As a result, after the enemy broke through the front line, the command turned out to be unable to oppose sufficient forces to the advancing enemy... |

2. The experience of war further shows that organized and firm command and control of troops in battle plays a decisive role and that the loss

,'  
Russian archive. The Great Patriotic War. Supreme Command Headquarters: Documents and Materials. 1942 T. 16 (5-2). M., 1996. S. 236-239.

“3

The connections between the command and the troops have a disastrous effect on the outcome of a combat operation...

Contrary to this experience, the command of the Crimean Front, in the very first hours of the enemy offensive, let go of command and control...

3. The experience of the war shows that the success of a combat operation is unthinkable without a well-organized interaction of all branches of the armed forces in battle ...

Contrary to this experience, the command of the Crimean Front did not organize the interaction of the armies with each other and did not at all ensure the interaction of ground forces with the aviation of the front ...

4. The experience of the war shows that along with the ability to organize an offensive battle, the command must be able, when the situation requires it, to withdraw its forces from the enemy's blow ...

Contrary to this experience, the command of the Crimean Front did not organize the withdrawal of troops ... When, on the second day after the start of the enemy offensive, given the situation on the Crimean Front, and seeing the helplessness of the front command, the Headquarters ordered the front armies to be systematically withdrawn to the positions of the Turkish Wall, front command and comrade. Mekhlis did not ensure the execution of the order of the Stavka in a timely manner, they began to withdraw two days late, and the gadfly took place in an unorganized and disorderly manner ...

C

The second reason for the failure of our troops on the Kerch Peninsula lies in the bureaucratic and paper method of leading the troops on the part of the front command and comrade. Mekhlis.

Tt. Kozlov and Mekhlis believed that their main task was to issue an order and that the issuance of an order ended their duty to lead the troops. They did not understand that issuing an order is only the beginning of work and that the main task of the command is to ensure the execution of the order, to bring the order to the troops, to organize assistance to the troops in fulfilling the order of the command.

... On the critical days of the operation, the command of the Crimean Front and comrade. Mekhlis, instead of personal communication with the commanders of the armies and instead of personal influence on the course of the operation, spent time at many hours of fruitless meetings of the Military Council.

III The third reason for the failures on the Kerch Peninsula is the indiscipline of Comrades.

Kozlov and Mekhlis. As noted above, vols. Kozlov and Mekhlis violated the direction of the Headquarters and did not ensure its implementation, did not ensure timely withdrawal of troops from the waters of the Turkish Wall. The delay of two days with the withdrawal of troops was disastrous for the outcome of the entire operation.

well well

Considering that tt. Mekhlis, Kozlov, Shamanin, Vechny, Chernyak, Kolganov, Nikolaenko (chief of the front aviation) showed their failure in leadership of the troops and are direct culprits for the unsuccessful outcome of the Kerch operation, the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command decided:

1. Remove the army commissar of the 1st rank comrade Mekhlis from the posts of deputy people's commissar of defense and head of the [Main] political department of the Red Army and reduce him in rank to corps commissar.

A:

The Headquarters considers it necessary that the commanders and military councils of all fronts and armies learn from these mistakes and shortcomings in the leadership of the command of the former Crimean Front.

The task is to ensure that our commanders truly understand the nature of modern warfare, understand the need for deep echeloning of troops and the allocation of reserves, understand the importance of organizing the interaction of all branches of the military, and especially the interaction of ground forces with aviation.

The task is to ensure that our commanding staff resolutely put an end to the vicious methods of bureaucratic-paper leadership and command and control of troops, not limit themselves to issuing orders, but often visit the troops, armies, divisions and help their subordinates in the implementation of command orders.

The task is to ensure that our command staff, commissars and political workers completely eradicate the elements of indiscipline in the environment of big and small commanders.

Headquarters of the Supreme High Command I. STALIN A. VASILEVSKY

"57

#### APPENDIX 10

#### LETTER FROM THE CORRESPONDENT OF THE NEWSPAPER "RED STAR" V. KOROTEEV TO THE CC AUCP(b) ON THE ATTITUDE IN THE TROOPS TO L.3. MECHLISU

TO THE SECRETARIES OF THE CC AUCP(b), comrade. G.M. MALENKOV comrade. A.S. SHERBAKOV

Being on the Bryansk front for a long time, I more than once had to hear sharp judgments about comrade. Mehliis, saying that many commanders and political workers are deeply hostile to Comrade. Mehliis, who arrived at the Bryansk Front in early July this year. Mr. as a member of the Military Council. This hostile expression can be defined more or less precisely: they are afraid of him, they do not like him, moreover, they hate him.

The origin of this hostility is apparently caused by Comrade Mekhlis's very drastic reprisals against commanders in the south, on the Voronezh and Volkhov fronts, the news of which apparently spread in the army and which are also known here, on the Bryansk front.

"Of course," many people say about him (for example, General Antropov, head of the operational department of the front headquarters, Lieutenant Colonel Shitov, deputy head of intelligence), "Mekhlis is a big, intelligent man, with a broad public outlook. But even with these qualities, it would still be better if he did not work in the army. In the army, the most talented, great people, even when Mekhlis is wrong, do not dare to challenge his opinion, because. are influenced by his former position and authority. Therefore, he crushes everyone and everything, he believes that everything is possible for him.

In support of this, they cite, among other things, the following fact: recently, Comrade Mekhlis ordered the heads of all departments and services of the rear to be called to him for 8 hours [hours], but he got busy with other things, and all the rear bosses - generals, colonels - exactly one day lay in the forest, waiting for the start of the meeting.

People here are well aware of Comrade Mekhlis's tough temper, his harshness, peremptory attitude towards everyone. They also say about him that he does not try to seek, win the love of his subordinates. According to Comrade Krivulin, a member of the Military Council of the 66th Army, people on the Steppe Front were so intimidated by his sharp telegrams, phone calls, reprimands that they did not know peace day or night, and when he left the Steppe Front, everyone was there. breathed a sigh of relief.

Every change in the command or political composition on the Bryansk Front, probably not without reason, is attributed to a new member of the Military Council. In the first days of Comrade Mekhlis's arrival, Colonel Yermakov, deputy chief of staff of the front, was replaced here. Ermakov was highly respected by people as an intelligent and experienced, truly charming commander who knew how to organize order at the headquarters - headquarters security, political work among commanders, etc.

Ermakov was replaced by Colonel Fisunov, the former secretary of Comrade Mekhlis. According to the opinion of the commanders, which must be shared, after the replacement of Ermakov, order at the headquarters did not increase at all, because. Fisunov's concerns mainly concern Voentorg.

Quite unexpectedly and, in the opinion of all, unfoundedly, the head of intelligence of the front, old Colonel Khlebov, one of the active participants in two operations of the front - Kastorno and Oryol, was also replaced. In the very first days of his arrival at the Bryansk Front, a new member of the Military Council told him: "Your work does not suit me." Soon Khlebov was seconded to Moscow and replaced by Colonel Maslov, who came from the Volkhov front.

A number of commanders and political workers are frightened to a certain extent by such facts and therefore are not sure that they will also not be replaced. For example, the editor of a front-line newspaper, Colonel Volovets, who almost every day receives sharp remarks from Comrade Mekhlis on the newspaper, is afraid to go to him and, as he confesses, is waiting for the day when Comrade Mekhlis will remove him. The newspaper's mistake was a few leading and full houses in July - "Let's arrange a second Stalingrad for the Germans near Orel." But the editorial board printed these full houses and editorials for half a month, proceeding from the instructions

Military Council of the Front.

I will not list other known facts. I fully understand that it is not my business to understand them. I wrote this letter after reflection and hesitation, frankly and frankly, desiring one thing: that the Central Committee of our Party, Comrade. Stalin would have known this mood of the commanders and political workers in relation to General Mekhlis.

15.[X.43

Major V. Koroteev

member of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks, correspondent of the Central Organ of the NGO Krasnaya Zvezda.

## APPENDIX 11

### FRAGMENTS OF ARTICLE L.3. MEHLIS "THIRTY YEARS OF SOCIALIST STATE CONTROL"!

The thirtieth anniversary of socialist State Control is a significant date for our country. The history of socialist control is a vivid illustration of how the party of Lenin-Stalin flexibly leads the organs of state administration, taking into account the changing situation and the peculiarities of this or that period of socialist construction.

5.

The state of control in the Soviet Republic was the subject of discussion at the US Congress of the RCP(b), which in its decisions demanded "the creation of genuine actual control of a socialist character." The question arose: to whom to entrust this gigantic work, who

in a difficult military situation, in conditions of economic disruption, he will cope with the tasks of controlling and organizing Soviet work, who will lead the restructuring of Soviet institutions from the bureaucratic filth ...

The great leader and founder of the Soviet state, Lenin, believed that there was no better candidate than Comrade Stalin, and he should be entrusted with the reorganization and leadership of State Control.

' True, 1949, April 9th.

<...>

Comrade Stalin worked at the post of People's Commissar of the RKI for three years, until his election, at the suggestion of V.I. Lenin, in April 1922 General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Party. Over the years, the socialist control has been a faithful assistant to the Party, has done a tremendous job of checking various branches of the national economy, combating mismanagement and wasteful spending of material resources, especially food, and improving the mechanism of power. The RKI was turned into a kind of center for accumulating experience in socialist construction.

>

In 1940, on the initiative of Comrade Stalin, on the basis of the Commission of Soviet Control and the Main Military Control, the People's Commissariat of State Control of the USSR was created. Its task is to control the accounting and spending of public funds and material assets and to verify the implementation of decisions of the Government. The main method of work of the State Control is documentary audits and checks (highlighted by L.Z. Mekhlis. - Yu.R.) of the economic and financial activities of enterprises, organizations and various departments ...

During its thirty years of existence, the Socialist State Control has undergone various organizational changes arising from the peculiarities of development and the state of the national economy at various stages, remaining invariably a faithful and powerful tool in the hands of the Party and the Government to verify the implementation of their decisions. Everyday communication with the Central Committee of the AUCP(b) and the Government, work under their direct supervision gives the State Control the strength and confidence in its work, the correct orientation in solving the immediate tasks.

In the context of the struggle to build a communist society, the role of the state and its economic and organizational functions are increasing in every possible way. Strengthen and improve the state apparatus, improve state discipline at all levels, increase the personal responsibility of each official for the area of work entrusted to him (highlighted by L.Z. Mekhlis. - Yu.R.) - this is what we, controllers, are obliged to work on

methods of socialist control. The questions raised by Comrade Stalin about the need to save the people's kopek for the further growth of the economy, to implement a brutal regime of economy, to eradicate all sorts of excesses, lawlessness and theft of state money and material values, arise with renewed vigor.

<...>

The organs of State Control as a whole and each controller separately must always and everywhere follow the line of our party, be unconditionally truthful, party-principled, one hundred percent objective and honest in conclusions based on the results of audits and inspections, not allow tendentiousness, falsehood and inaccuracies. sincerity, to prevent merging with controlled institutions and persons. The supervisory staff must be free from any preconceived notions and always remember Comrade Stalin's instruction that

that "an attempt to adjust a figure to one or another prejudiced opinion is a crime of a criminal nature"...

State inspectors are entrusted with checking the Soviet apparatus, Soviet workers, regardless of their faces. This greatly increases the responsibility of the supervisory staff for their activities. Our special constant concern is to justify the trust of the people, the trust of the Central Committee of the Party and the Government, the trust of the great Stalin.

## \_ BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

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